

NATURAL RESOURCES BOARD AGENDA ITEM

Item No. 6.A.

SUBJECT: INFORMATION ITEM - Special advisory study committee report on the establishment of alternatives to existing deer herd control measures such as earn-a-buck hunting regulations.

FOR: AUGUST, 2009 **BOARD MEETING**

TO BE PRESENTED BY: Ralph Fritsch
Chair, NRB Earn-a-Buck Alternatives Committee

SUMMARY:

In May the Natural Resources Board established a special advisory study committee to develop potential alternatives to deer herd control measures such as earn-a-buck regulations. The committee has met at least three times and will deliver its final report.

The members of this advisory committee were invited from organizations representing deer hunters and landowners along with several individuals from the deer science and research community. Members were asked to address hunters' concerns with existing season options and investigate additional options. The committee's recommendations may be developed as rule proposals that establish deer season frameworks in management units when a traditional hunting season is not likely to reduce the deer population to goals established in NR 10.104.

New deer hunting season frameworks or regulations could be implemented as early as the 2010 deer season.

RECOMMENDATION: This item is informational and no action is needed.

LIST OF ATTACHED MATERIALS:

No ☐ Fiscal Estimate Required
No ☐ Environmental Assessment or Impact Statement Required
No ☐ Background Memo

Yes ☐ Attached
Yes ☐ Attached
Yes ☐ Attached

APPROVED:

Tom Hauge
Bureau Director, Tom Hauge

7/13/09
Date

Laurie Osterndorf
Administrator, Laurie Osterndorf

7/14/09
Date

Matt Frank
Secretary, Matt Frank

7-21-09
Date

cc: Laurie J. Ross - AD/8
Scott Loomans - WM/6

Ketih Warnke - WM/6

Tom Hauge - WM/6



Wisconsin Natural Resources Board

Report on Effective Alternatives to Existing Herd Control Methods (EAB)

Submitted by

2009 Special Advisory Study Committee

June 17, 2009 to August 1, 2009

Summary

This report contains the recommendations and findings of the eleven member 2009 NRB Special Advisory Study Committee assembled to develop potential alternatives to current herd control regulations including Earn-A-Buck (EAB).

Recommendations were arrived at by majority vote of Committee members and do not necessarily reflect the individual views of the organizations represented.

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Special Advisory Study Committee

- WCC - Wisconsin Conservation Congress
- WFBF - Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation
- QDMA - Quality Deer Management Association
- WHRC – Wisconsin Hunters Rights Coalition
- University of Wisconsin - Madison
- WBA - Wisconsin Bow Hunters Association
- WCFA - Wisconsin County Forest Association
- WDHA - Wisconsin Deer Hunters Association
- WWF - Wisconsin Wildlife Federation
- WWOA - Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association
- WTU - Whitetails Unlimited

Ralph Fritch – Chairperson

Mark Noll – Vice Chairperson



1. Executive Summary

The NRB Special Advisory Committee on alternative deer herd control methods concluded its work on Saturday August 1, 2009 after beginning with their first phone conference on June 17, 2009. During this six and a half week period, the eleven member Committee held six phone conferences, three in-person meetings, collaborated via a dedicated website www.wiherdcontrol.org, and conducted ten online surveys to gather comments from their respective organizations, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the general public, and members of the Committee.

The charge to the Committee was spelled out in a May 29, 2009 invitation to organizations:

1. Work with the DNR to develop effective alternatives to Earn-A-Buck (EAB). Acceptable alternatives must be shown to be effective for deer population management and supported by hunters and landowners and able to be evaluated through established benchmarks.
2. Serve as a conduit for various hunting constituencies.
3. In addition to generating new ideas, evaluate previously identified options (Deer 2000 and Beyond, Deer Streamlining Effort).
4. Forward a recommendation to the NRB in time for the DNR to make recommendations to the NRB so that EAB alternatives can be in place for the 2010 deer season.

The outcome of the Committee's work is presented in the five parts described below:

- Committee Recommendations
These were approved by majority vote of the Committee members at the final meeting on August 1, 2009 based on their consideration of input from DNR biologists on expected effectiveness; input from Conservation Wardens on enforceability; and thousands of public comments from an online survey.
- Committee Findings
This section describes the proposals rejected by majority vote of Committee members at the final meeting on August 1, 2009.
- Undecided and other Options
Some proposals fell short of majority support or rejection. Members also introduced proposals during the final meeting. These are reported for purposes of completeness.
- Other Factors and Considerations
At the final meeting, several motions were made to include comments in this report regarding deer management issues outside the scope of the Committee's charge.
- Original List of Potential Alternatives
The Committee developed a list of eighty-three (83) potential alternatives compiled from other states, past working committees, past studies, and current Wisconsin practices. The full list is included in the appendix.



The scope of the Committee's work excluded addressing the following topics:

- Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) zones
- Sex-Age-Kill (SAK) Population Modeling
- Deer Management Unit (DMU) Boundaries
- Deer Population Goals
- Deer Baiting and Feeding
- Predators/Predation

With the support of the DNR, the Committee utilized a project website www.wiherdcontrol.org to facilitate Committee discussions between meetings; share reference materials related to deer herd management; provide public notification of the Committee's work and online surveys; and share the Committee's work with the public. The site will remain available through December 2010 as a source of public information on the Committee's work and related reference materials. The website and contents are described in more detail in the report Appendix.

Committee's Recommendation Approach

The Committee's approach began with defining and agreeing upon the following items.

- Season Components
(Hunting method, time period, location, and any antlerless restrictions)
- Targeted Incentives
(Requirements that encourage hunter preference or hunter land access)

With these defined and rated based on hunter/landowner support; effectiveness; and enforceability, a detailed alternative season package could be assembled via a majority vote selection process.

The reason for this approach was the Committee's sense that non-EAB targeted incentives alone would be ineffective. By combining incentives with Season Components, the Committee strove to develop an alternative Season Package capable of effectively addressing over-population goal herd control units while helping maintain herd populations at or near unit goals statewide.

Season Components + Targeted Incentives = Alternative Season Package ➞ *EAB Effectiveness*

Committee majority votes forwarded some proposed season components and incentives for final consideration while eliminating others. The Committee's final recommendations reflect the collaborative nature of the majority selection process that sought effective alternatives while also attempting to garner an acceptable level of hunter/landowner support.

The Committee's references included past studies, historical deer harvest data; an informal survey of five other states' deer herd managers; surveys and comments from over 100 Wisconsin conservation wardens and biologists/wildlife managers on potential enforceability, effectiveness, and feasibility issues; survey data and comments from over 1,500 Wisconsin landowners (>40 acres), over 4,000 deer hunters including 1,000 gun-only deer hunters and 100 bow-only deer hunters. In addition, the Committee members themselves represented several centuries of combined hunting experience.



Committee Alternative Recommendation Summary

The Committee was unable in the time allotted to completely finalize and agree upon a complete detailed Season Package consisting of both Season Components and Targeted Incentives.

Instead, after considering over a dozen different structures of season components and over eighty hunter/landowner incentives, the Committee's work process gravitated towards recommending a 16 day regular firearm season to provide additional hunting day opportunities to increase the potential effectiveness of the non-EAB alternative hunter incentives being considered. Based upon the historical harvest by day and season data reviewed, the regular firearm season was the base upon which to build the remainder of the season structure.

A majority (6 in favor) of the eleven-member Advisory Committee at the August 1st meeting selected a statewide 16 day firearm season structure that opens a week earlier than the current opener. The remainder (4) voted in favor of a statewide 16 day firearm season using the current season's opening day. The Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation was unable to attend August 1st.

The final Committee member votes were limited to selecting from the two competing 16 day firearm season structures that had evolved over the six week work process that began with each Committee member's proposed ideal alternatives.

Thus, the Committee's season structure recommendations do not necessarily reflect the exact views of the organizations represented on the Committee or the Committee members themselves. They represent the outcome of a collaborative development process that attempted to weigh public hunter and landowner support with an acceptable level of herd control effectiveness.

Likewise, using Committee majority processes, the Committee developed 4 hunter incentives, 5 private landowner incentives, and 3 public land manager incentives. The selection of these considered hunter/landowner support, herd control effectiveness, and enforceability.

The details of these recommendations are provided in the Committee Recommendations section.

Committee Member Perspective Attachments

Committee members were provided the opportunity to attach as part of an addendum of this report a two page summary of their organization's background and unique perspectives to this report.

These attachments draft by each organization may include more specific or even different recommendations than the Committee's alternative recommendations. Differences are due to each organization's unique perspectives and conclusions on deer herd management methods and potential alternatives. The majority vote method of developing the Committee's alternative recommendations inherently eliminated proposals that some organizations may have viewed to be ideal.

Including these was intended to provide insight into each organization's unique perspective.



2. Committee Recommendations

The Committee's recommendations were derived from an initial list of over 80 potential alternatives assembled from other states, prior DNR reports, public comments, current committee members, and past committees. The work involved in selecting the recommended season structure and incentives included gathering input from hunters and landowners, DNR Conservation Wardens, DNR administrative staff, and Wildlife Managers and Biologists.

To meet the challenge of developing non-EAB alternatives that balanced public support with acceptable levels of effectiveness, the Committee's approach was to define potential Season Components and Incentives that could then be assembled into a final Season Package.

- **Season Components**
Defined by hunting method (firearm, bow, muzzleloader), time period (opening date and closing date), location (statewide or herd control units) and sex (antlerless or either-sex).
- **Targeted Incentives**
Proposals that encourage a hunter preference for either-sex or antlerless harvest.
Proposals that encourage private landowners or public land managers to provide hunter access.
- **Season Package**
Combination of Season Components and Incentives.

The Committee sensed that non-EAB targeted incentives alone would be less effective. By combining incentives with Season Components, the Committee strove to develop alternative Season Packages capable of effectively addressing over-population units while helping maintain herd populations at or near goal statewide. This approach can be summarized as:

Season Components + Targeted Incentives = Earn-A-Buck Effectiveness

Majority votes by the committee forwarded some proposed season components and incentives for final consideration while eliminating others. The final recommendation of the Committee reflects the collaborative nature of the Committee working to develop an effective alternative to mandatory incentives such as Earn-A-Buck while garnering hunter/landowner support.

Balancing public support with developing an alternative proposal having an acceptable level of effectiveness compared to mandatory herd control incentives such as Earn-A-Buck (EAB) was challenging.

The Committee recommendations below do not represent a final recommendation of a season structure tied to specific incentives. The Committee's recommendations provide a base season structure that will require a careful selection of alternative incentives based on unit specific population conditions. The Committee, in taking up the NRB's charge, placed significant weight on developing effective alternatives while seeking to develop an alternative that would garner an acceptable level of hunter and landowner support.



Proposed Alternative 16 Day Season Structures

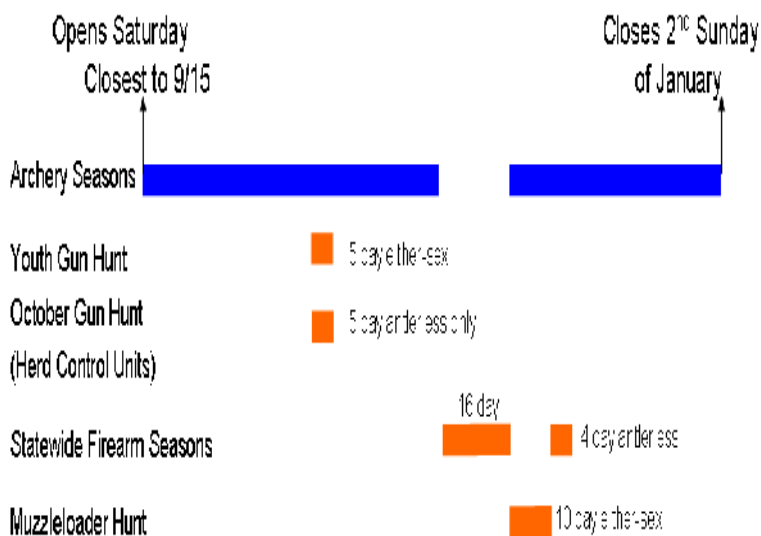
The Committee's proposed season structures below do not represent final completed packages of both season structures and incentives. They represent a base package season structure that would benefit from increased effectiveness by incorporating appropriate incentives from the list of those supported by a majority of Committee members. A list of those incentives follows this section.

The Special Advisory Committee reached a majority (6 in favor) approval of an alternative season structure that opens a week earlier than current opening day, along with a list of potential incentives that could be applied based on regional and unit specific population conditions.

The Committee's majority approved alternative season structure is shown below.

Proposed 16 Day Earlier Opener Season Components

16 Day Statewide Earlier Opener



General Firearm Season

16-day Statewide season opens two Saturdays before Thanksgiving (one week earlier than currently). Raccoon hunting allowed during the last 7 nights.

Early Archery Season

Opens Statewide on the Saturday closest to September 15th. Closes on the Thursday before the 16 day firearm season.

Youth Season

Either Sex. Statewide. Second weekend of October – 5 days concurrent with antlerless herd control hunt. Saturday through Wednesday.

Muzzleloader Hunt Seasons

10-day Statewide season either-sex opens on Monday immediately following close of 16-day General Firearm Season (Same as Current).

October Firearm Hunt in Herd Control Units

5-day October firearm season antlerless-only in Herd Control Units concurrent with the statewide October 5-day Youth Firearm Hunt.

December Firearm Hunt Season Statewide

4-day antlerless firearm hunt immediately after the muzzleloader hunt (Same as Current).

Late Archery Season

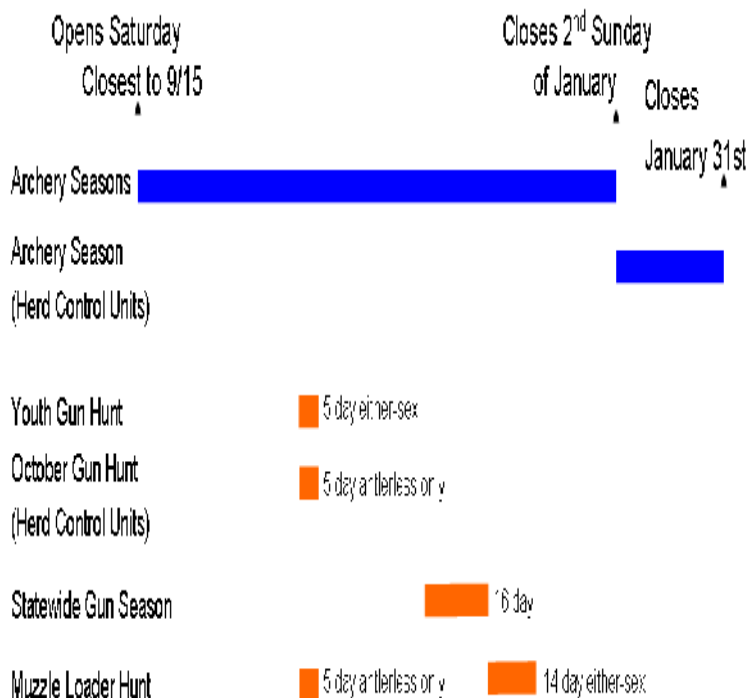
Begins on Monday, the day after 16-day firearm season and ends the second Sunday in January.

With this earlier opener, the Thanksgiving holiday will always fall during the second week of the firearm season.



A competing 16 day firearm season opening on the current opening day was a runner up with 4 votes in favor.

Proposed 16 Day Traditional Opener Season Components



General Firearm Season

16-day Statewide season opening on the Saturday before Thanksgiving.
Raccoon hunting allowed during the last 7 nights.

Archery Season

Opens Statewide on the Saturday closest to September 15th running continually through all firearms seasons.

Closes on the 2nd Sunday in January.
Closes January 31 in Herd Control Units.

October Youth Season

Either Sex. Statewide. Second weekend of October – 5 days concurrent with muzzleloader hunt and herd control hunt. Saturday through Wednesday.

October Muzzle loader Hunt Season

Antlerless only with antlerless unit-specific tag, 5 days concurrent with youth hunt and herd control hunt beginning second Saturday in October.

October Firearm Season Herd Control Units

5 Day Antlerless season. Herd Control units only concurrent with 5 day youth and Muzzleloader hunt. 5-day October firearm season antlerless-only in Herd Control Units concurrent with the statewide October 5-day Youth Firearm Hunt and Muzzleloader hunt.

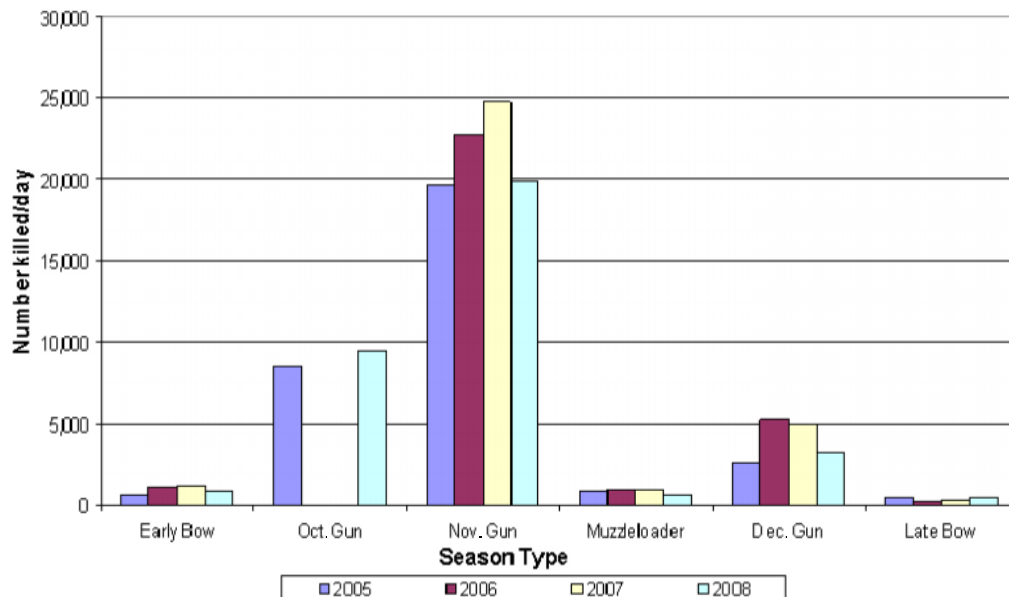
December Muzzle Loader Hunt Season

14-day Statewide either-sex season opens on Monday immediately following close of 16-day General Firearm Season.

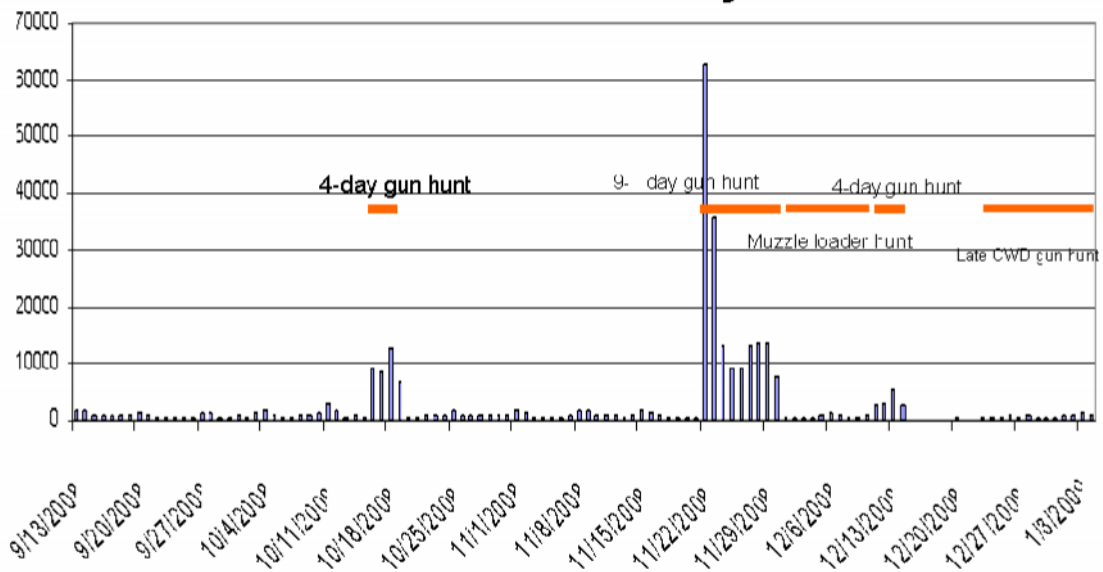
The favoring of a longer 16 Day November firearm season evolved as the Committee attempted to identify a reliable means to increase deer harvest intensity without the use of mandatory incentives such as Earn-A-Buck. Based on the data provided below on antlerless deer harvested by season type and antlerless deer harvested by date in 2008, a longer November firearm season appeared to be a component of an effective alternative to maintaining deer herd populations at or near goal.



Antlerless Deer Harvest per day by season type, 2005-08



Antlerless Deer Harvest by Date 2008



The earlier opening date of the 16 Day Season Structure favored by the majority of the Committee generated discussion in regards to the impact of moving the gun season closer to the peak rutting period. The hunter incentives supported by the Committee may be a method of offsetting potential impacts of the earlier opening date when a final Season Package is assembled.



Responses to the online comment surveys were used during the Committee's work process developing an alternative season package. This was done by submitting three different types of season packages for consideration in an online survey. Full detail of each package is included in the appendix, but for general reference the summary below is provided.

- 9 Day – 16 Day Herd Control Season Package
9 day season for regular units with an extended 16 day season for herd control units
- 16 Day Statewide Traditional Opener
16 day extended firearm season starting on same day as current opener.
- Targeted Harvest Incentive Package
16 Day Statewide firearm season starting on same day as current opener with additional incentives to encourage antlerless harvest in targeted herd control units.

Wardens and Wildlife Biologists were asked to rate each package compared to the current herd control season and also to the Earn A Buck (EAB) season structures. The public was asked about their level of support in comparison to the current season structure and herd control methods such as EAB. The results are shown below including breakdown of public results by type of hunter, geographic location, and landowners with 40 or more acres of land.

	Support of Packages Proposed on Survey		
	9 Day - 16 Day Herd Control Season	16 Day Statewide Traditional Opener	Targeted Harvest Incentive Package
Wildlife Biologist Effectiveness	More than current Much less than EAB	More than current Much less than EAB	More than current Much less than EAB
Conservation Warden Enforceability	Same as current Same as EAB	Same as current Same as EAB	Less than current Same as EAB

Public Responses Support Level	9 Day - 16 Day Herd Control Season	16 Day Statewide Traditional Opener	Targeted Harvest Incentive Package
All Responses 3,969*	Less support	More support	Less support
Bow ONLY hunters Responses 101	Much less support	Much less support	Much less support
Bow/Gun hunters Responses 1,333	Much less support	More support	Much less support
Gun ONLY hunters Responses 1,167	More support	Much more support	Much less support
Muzzleloaders Responses 549	Much less support	Much less support	Much less support
Landowner >40acre	Less Support	Same support	Less Support
All Above Hwy 64 Responses 2,189	Same support	More support	More Support
All below Hwy 64 Responses 1,058	Much less support	More support	Much less support

Although over 5,000 responses were collected, some of these were largely incomplete indicating the respondent abandoned the effort with less than half the answers completed. In addition, 138 duplicate submissions were found and removed from analysis with the latest or most complete submission retained.

% of total: 96% gun hunt , 77% bow hunt, 45% muzzleloader hunt, 6% Youth hunt, 1% do not hunt



The simplicity of both final proposed 16 day season structures grew somewhat out of the Committee's review of public comments compiled from the public comment survey responses. These generally indicated a desire to have season structures that were readily understood and not overly complicated with numerous specialty seasons. This may have influenced the elimination of additional firearm hunting day opportunities from both 16 day packages.

A complete Season Package based on the 16 day earlier opener would require additional hunter and land owner incentives to increase effectiveness in over-goal units while other targeted incentives could be used to protect against over harvesting in units that are at or near goal.

Targeted Incentives - Supported

The Committee began with a list of sixty-seven (67) potential alternatives compiled from other states; past working committees; past studies; and current Wisconsin practices. The Committee added over a dozen additional alternatives to the original list for a total of eighty-three (83) items. Each of these was rated using online surveys of Committee members, conservation wardens, wildlife biologists, and DNR administrative staff.

This input was used to select the incentives expected to have an acceptable level of hunter and landowner support, effectiveness at herd control, and enforceability in the field. The Committee decided not to weigh whether an incentive required rule or legislative action to implement when considering these for recommendation.

Incentives were generally categorized as being *Hunter Incentives* intended to encourage a preference of either-sex or antlerless harvesting; *Landowner Incentives* to increase hunter access to privately owned land; and *Public Land Access Incentives* to increase hunter access to publically owned land.

The incentives supported by Committee majority are shown in table form on the next page. For each incentive, Committee members considered and voted on the following questions for each incentive.

- Do you find the incentive will have an acceptable level of hunter and landowner support?
- Do you find the incentive will have an acceptable level of effectiveness at maintaining herd populations at or near goal?
- Do you find the incentive will have an acceptable level of enforceability in the field?

Following the recording of the Committee members' responses to the above questions, a vote was taken on whether a majority of the Committee would recommend the incentive as a potential option in a final season package. Items with six (6) or more votes in favor indicate Committee majority support.

The table on the following page lists the incentives supported by a majority of the Committee.



Y = # voted in favor

S = # votes acceptable level of hunter/landowner support

N = # against

EF = # votes acceptable level of effectiveness

EN = # votes acceptable level of enforceability

Incentives Supported by Majority of Committee Members

Description	Type	Y	N	S	EF	EN
Increase the number of donation sites throughout the state for venison donation program.	Hunter Incentive	10	0	10	9	9
Eliminate group bagging of bucks in Wisconsin during the firearms season to increase antlerless harvest.	Hunter Incentive	7	2	2	5	3
For the current herd control and season structure, increase the trigger point at which herd control efforts are implemented from 20% or more over population goal (currently used) to 25% or more over population goal.	Hunter Incentive	7	3	2	1	1
First buck without EAB requirement in herd control units: Hunters are authorized to harvest their first buck per year (bow or firearm) without EAB requirements, authorization for an additional buck requires harvesting a doe first (bow or firearm). For example a person with a valid bow hunting license could shoot their first buck with a bow, then shoot a doe (with a bow or firearm and the license for the weapon they choose to use) and then be authorized to harvest a second buck (using either a bow or a firearm and the license for the weapon they choose). Similarly, a person with a valid firearm license could shoot their first buck with a firearm then shoot a doe (with firearm or bow and the license for the weapon they choose to use) and then be authorized to harvest a second buck (using either a bow or a firearm and the license for the weapon they choose). Weapons must be used during the appropriate weapon-specific seasons.	Hunter Incentive	7	2	4	6	3
Require that any lands or property interests purchased using the Knowles Nelson Stewardship funds be open for public access for outdoor activities including hunting, where legal and appropriate.	Landowner Incentive	10	0	5	4	0
Develop initiatives that would reduce the number of acres of Managed Forest Law properties that are closed to public hunting access from 160 acres to 80 acres and restrict corporate owned closed ownership.	Landowner Incentive	10	0	3	5	4
Landowner tags. Antlerless only. Statewide. Valid only on property for which issued by wildlife managers. Transferrable.	Landowner Incentive	9	1	6	6	2
Develop programs that would provide payments to private landowners who allow hunter access to their property (as is done in other states).	Landowner Incentive	6	4	7	5	2
DNR Forestry – education initiative to forest owners	Landowner Incentives	10	0	5	4	4
Public woodland damage tags. Antlerless only. Statewide. Valid only on property for which issued by wildlife managers.	Public Land Access Incentive	7	3	2	3	1
Require some form of public harvest of deer on all state owned lands of 10 acres or more.	Public Land Access Incentive	6	3	7	6	4
Develop initiatives that would promote hunting and antlerless harvests on private forests.	Public Land Access Incentive	10	0	6	6	3



The Committee members' votes in the table above illustrate the difficulty with selecting between alternatives deemed effective and also deemed to have hunter and landowner support.

While the Committee recognized that some potential alternative methods recommended would not enjoy support amongst hunters and/or landowners, there was a need to identify effective alternatives. Additionally, some members voting as 'not in favor' of a particular incentive may have agreed with the basic concept, but were in favor of making it more effective before offering their support.

The Committee's majority support of these incentives is intended to provide additional options when developing a final season package to increase effectiveness. The alternative incentives that failed to gain majority Committee support are listed under the Committee Findings in the next report section.

Below is a comparison to responses from the public (Favorable, Unfavorable), conservation wardens on enforceability (Less enforceable or no change n/c), and wildlife biologists on effectiveness.

Table of Summarized Responses from Comment Surveys

Description of Committee Majority Supported Incentives	P	W	B
Increase the number of donation sites throughout the state for venison donation program.	F	n/c	n/c
Eliminate group bagging of bucks in Wisconsin during the firearms season to increase antlerless harvest.	U	U	U
For the current herd control and season structure, increase the trigger point at which herd control efforts are implemented from 20% or more over population goal (currently used) to 25% or more over population goal.	n/c	n/c	F
First buck without EAB requirement in herd control units.	F	L	L
Require that any lands or property interests purchased using the Knowles Nelson Stewardship funds be open for public access for outdoor activities including hunting, where legal & appropriate.	F	n/c	F
Develop initiatives that would reduce the number of acres of Managed Forest Law properties that are closed to public hunting access from 160 acres to 80 acres and restrict corporate owned closed ownership.	F	n/c	F
Landowner tags. Antlerless only. Statewide. Valid only on property for which issued by wildlife managers. Transferrable.	F	n/c	F
Develop programs that would provide payments to private landowners who allow hunter access to their property (as is done in other states).	F	n/c	F
DNR Forestry – education initiative to forest owners	F	F	F
Public woodland damage tags. Antlerless only. Statewide. Valid only on property for which issued by wildlife managers.	U	n/c	F
Require some form of public harvest of deer on all state owned lands of 10 acres or more.	F	n/c	F
Develop initiatives that would promote hunting and antlerless harvests on private forests.	F	n/c	F

Additional analysis of the response data gathered by the Committee could be performed to gain further understanding of the public's level of support of the alternatives proposed along with the level of effectiveness and enforceability expected by conservation wardens and wildlife biologists.



Individual Season Components - Supported

As part of the Committee's work process at the second meeting, each individual season component was broken down and described in detail to ensure common understanding between members.

Using these well-defined season components, the Committee worked to assemble proposed season structures that could be directly compared and discussed. Ultimately, some components became part of a final season structures voted upon at the August 1st meeting. The remaining components not included in one of the final two season structures had been considered individually by Committee members during the work process. This consideration was recorded as hash-marks on wall posters listing each of the components indicating each Committee member's level of interest with potentially including a component in a final package.

The season components with a majority of Committee members indicating an interest in considering these for a final package are shown in the table below.

August 1, 2009 Meeting - Season Component - Committee Supported Individual Main Season Components

# Interested	
7	16 – day regular gun season statewide. Traditional opening date – Saturday before Thanksgiving.

Individual Archery Season Components

7	Unchanged archery opening date - Saturday closest to September 15. Statewide. Continuous archery hunt through the gun seasons, ending the second Sunday in January. Antlerless only during antlerless only firearm seasons.
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Individual Youth Firearm Hunt Components

8	Either Sex. 5 day, Statewide. Opening the second Saturday of October. NO antler restriction.
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Individual October Muzzleloader Herd Control Hunt Components

8	Antlerless only, 5 day, Statewide. Second Saturday of October – coincidental with youth hunt.
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Individual December Muzzleloader Season Components

6	December muzzle loader season: Either sex, 10 day, Statewide. Opening the Monday following close of regular firearm season. No December firearm antlerless only hunt (t-zone) with antler restrictions.
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The table above indicates that the concurrent youth and muzzleloader October season enjoyed steady support of Committee members. The other season components listed were considered by a majority of Committee members to be potentially useful for a final season package development.



Committee Recommendation Summary

The Committee's majority recommended season structure and list of potential incentives represents a starting point for a more detailed construction of a complete season package.

Any final season package assembled needs to carefully consider regional and unit specific incentives to avoid creating a final season package that inadvertently over-harvests at or below population areas, or under-harvests significantly over-population areas.

The Committee arrived at its recommendations after evaluating the expected effectiveness of each season component and incentive using conservation warden and biologist/wildlife manager input on enforceability and effectiveness, while also taking into consideration the acceptable level of hunter and landowner support needed to ensure participation in herd control seasons.

When considering effectiveness and the level of hunter and landowner support, definitions were agreed upon to help provide consistency when Committee members rated their level of support.

Effectiveness was defined as the ability of a season or incentive to maintain herd populations at or near goal. This inherently includes requiring the ability to allow targeted herd control incentives to reduce over population conditions, while also allowing the flexibility to protect from over-harvesting in units at or below goal.

Discussions on defining the level of hunter and landowner support began with concepts based on the level of participation that could be expected regardless of public opinion on the herd control measures being implemented. Further discussion decided that it was more important for the Committee to consider hunter and landowner's acceptance of the measures before implementation. This recognized the need for public support during final review and legislative processes to have any changes adopted in time for the 2010 season. Thus, the Committee attempted to weigh public opinion of alternatives over any expectations of actual participation should an alternative be adopted.

The Committee also recognized geographic differences in the state that require consideration during final season package development. As a possible aide in this regard, the surveys conducted allow segregation of responses from respondents mainly involved with herd control efforts above or below Hwy 64.

The relatively short period of time limited the Committee's ability to develop survey tools ideally suited for statistical analysis. Even so, the data collected should prove useful to the NRB and others as final recommendations for alternative herd control measures move forward through the public and legislative review processes.



3. Committee Findings

This report section covers the proposed alternatives that a majority of Committee members **voted not to support**. These are included here for reference and to report on the Committee's detailed vote for each proposal's expected level of hunter/landowner support, effectiveness, and enforceability.

Targeted Incentives– Not Supported

Y = # voted in favor
N = # against

S = # votes acceptable level of hunter/landowner support
EF = # votes acceptable level of effectiveness EN = # votes acceptable level of enforceability

Description	Type	Y	N	S	EF	EN
Implement antler restrictions for all deer seasons/weapons, for the entire length of the season.	Hunter Incentive	3	6	0	3	0
This was an alternative question asked in relationship to the public survey's "Targeted Harvest Incentives Package" that included antler restrictions. Define antler restriction as 3 points on a side or an outside spread to the tips of the ears north of Hwy 64 and 4 points on a side or an outside spread to the tips of the ears south of Hwy 64.	Hunter Incentive	3	7	0	3	0
For the current herd control and season structure, allow the use of EAB only after 2 years of herd control, and only if >50% over population goals (current is criteria is >20% and 2 years).	Hunter Incentive	1	8	1	1	2
This was an alternative question asked in relationship to the public survey's "Targeted Harvest Incentives Package" that included antler restrictions. Do antler restrictions lessen your concerns with hunting pressure pushing deer off your property if you knew those bucks could not be harvested by others?	Landowner Incentive	3	7	0	3	0
Tag allocation public vs. private lands in herd control units. Private land antlerless tags in Herd Control Units free and available over the counter at all license venders and registration stations. Public land quotas and free tags established for Herd Control units and issued the same as regular unit bonus tags.	Landowner Incentive	3	6	4	5	1
Deny municipal shooting grants where some form of public harvest of deer is not allowed.	Public Land Access Incentive	4	6	2	4	2
16 – day regular gun season statewide. Annual opener the Saturday closest to November 17th. In three years of six, the gun season would open on the traditional opener. In three years of six, the gun season would open one week earlier than the traditional opener.	Season Component	2	6	4	5	6



Below is a comparison to responses from the public (Favorable, Unfavorable), conservation wardens on enforceability (Less enforceable or no change n/c), and wildlife biologists on effectiveness.

Table of Summarized Incentive Responses from Comment Surveys

Description of Committee Majority Supported Incentives	P	W	B
Implement antler restrictions for all deer seasons/weapons, for the entire length of the season.	U	L	U
This was an alternative question asked in relationship to the public survey's "Targeted Harvest Incentives Package" that included antler restrictions. Define antler restriction as 3 points on a side or an outside spread to the tips of the ears north of Hwy 64 and 4 points on a side or an outside spread to the tips of the ears south of Hwy 64.	U	L	U
For the current herd control and season structure, allow the use of EAB only after 2 years of herd control, and only if >50% over population goals (current is criteria is >20% and 2 years).	F	n/c	n/c
This was an alternative question asked in relationship to the public survey's "Targeted Harvest Incentives Package" that included antler restrictions. Do antler restrictions lessen your concerns with hunting pressure pushing deer off your property if you knew those bucks could not be harvested by others?	U	L	U
Tag allocation public vs. private lands in herd control units. Private land antlerless tags in Herd Control Units free and available over the counter at all license venders and registration stations. Public land quotas and free tags established for Herd Control units and issued the same as regular unit bonus tags.	F	L	n/c
Deny municipal shooting grants where some form of public harvest of deer is not allowed.	F	L	n/c
16 – day regular gun season statewide. Annual opener the Saturday closest to November 17th. In three years of six, the gun season would open on the traditional opener. In three years of six, the gun season would open one week earlier than the traditional opener.	U	L	n/c

The above results are summarized from the responses collected. Review of the full response summaries along with respondents' text comments are recommended by those using the survey data for developing alternative herd control management methods.

Copies of the comment survey questions and summarized data sets will be available online at www.wiherdcontrol.org through December 2010. More detail on the survey development process and methodology is included in the section titled Survey Response Summary.

Individual Season Components – Not Supported

The season components not included in one of the Committee's final proposed season structures were all previously considered individually by the Committee.

This was recorded by Committee members placing hash-marks next to each season component they saw as a potential candidate for a final package.

Below are the individual season components that did not have a majority of members interested in supporting these as part of one of the final packages. This was done at the final meeting on August 1, 2009.



August 1, 2009 Meeting - Season Component - Committee Non-Support

Main Season Component	
# Support	Description
3	Statewide 9-day firearm season opening on the Traditional Opener.
Archery Season Component	
3	Extended archery season to January 31st in Herd Control Units state-wide. Either-sex.
October Muzzleloader Herd Control Hunt Component	
2	5 day October muzzleloader season antlerless-only statewide opening immediately after the 4-day statewide Youth Firearm Hunt.
3	10 day December either sex muzzleloader season in all regular, non-herd control units, starting the day after the close of the regular firearm season.
3	Herd Control Units 5-day October firearm season antlerless-only in Herd Control Units beginning the day after the 4-day statewide October Youth Firearm Hunt. Muzzleloaders permitted but no dedicated October muzzle loader season in herd control units.
December Muzzleloader Season Component	
1	Herd Control Unit December muzzle loader season. Either sex, 7-day, herd control only. Opening the Monday after the close of the 16 day herd control unit firearm season. NO 4-day antlerless firearm hunt in herd control units as it would overlap the muzzleloader season.
0	Herd Control Units 10-day Holiday Hunt season either sex for firearms in herd control units south of Hwy 64 ONLY! Opens December 24 th .
3	Holiday hunt. South of 64. Herd control units only. Opening December 24 running for 10 days. Antlerless only. Any legal weapon.

The above listing does not necessarily indicate that a majority disapproved of these individual season components. Rather, as the work process was nearing completion, Committee members did not favor including the above in one of the final packages.



4. Undecided and Other Options

The item below neither obtained a Committee majority to be approved nor sufficient votes to be rejected by the Committee.

Undecided Option

Proposed Alternative Method or Incentive	Type	Y	N	S	E	EF
Bonus buck. In herd control units. During all seasons. 3 antlerless deer will qualify for one extra buck tag. Limit of one extra buck.	Hunter Incentive	5	5	0	4	2

Other Options

During the final meeting on August 1, 2009, Committee members were able to introduce new incentive or season component concepts using a fill in the blank form that required at least three other Committee members to sign-on before it would be considered and voted upon by the full Committee.

The table below shows the results of these activities.

M = Y or N Majority voted in favor to recommend U = undecided, majority neither in favor or against

S = # voting they found an acceptable level of hunter/landowner support

E = # voting they found an acceptable level of effectiveness

EF = # voting they found an acceptable level of enforceability

Items Added During August 1, 2009 Meeting

Proposed Alternative Method or Incentive	Type	M	S	E	EF
Recommend alternative herd control measures be implemented universally including CWD management units.	Season Structure	U	-	-	-
Using hounds to hunt deer during the December antlerless hunt.	Hunter Incentive	N	2	6	0
Antler restrictions on any extensions or additional deer hunting days (bow or gun).	Hunter Incentive	N	3	3	4
If there is a holiday season in herd control units, start on December 26th 7-day antlerless only.	Season Component	Y	9	9	10
Solid Season Framework.	Season Structure	Y	6	3	9
Solid season proposal plus the following: -continuous archery season - herd control 4 day Oct antlerless hunt for firearm - concurrent 4 day Oct youth hunt either-sex - statewide holiday hunt beginning Dec 26, 7 days antlerless only.	Season Structure	Y	7	9	6
16 day gun season early opener antlerless only in the first week to maximize antlerless harvest statewide Sat to Friday antlerless 2nd Sat through rest of the season. Either sex.	Season Structure	N	6	6	7

The 'Solid Season Framework' described above became the basis for the 16 day earlier opener season package proposed by the Committee.



5. Survey Response Summary

The Committee conducted a total of ten (10) online surveys not including the five (5) online surveys used internally by the Committee as selection tools of potential alternatives. None of the surveys were designed for statistical analysis. They were designed to gather comments from the general public, DNR administrative staff, wildlife biologists, and conservation wardens.

Summaries of the survey results are provided in the Appendix to highlight information that may be of interest to the NRB as it continues exploring alternatives to EAB and other herd control methods.

Ranking Of Initial List of Alternatives

An online questionnaire gathered the relative ranking of each of the 83 alternatives initially assembled by the Committee and DNR. This information provided insights into the effectiveness, cost to implement, complexity, and potential conflicts with other outdoor recreational users.

In total 105 DNR staff participated allowing the Committee to rank the original list of alternatives based on effectiveness, enforceability, complexity, and potential conflict with other recreational groups.

Season Package Assembly Survey

The Committee used an online survey to poll members on which season components and incentives they preferred. This information along with working groups within the Committee developed the three alternative season structures for the public comment survey.

Organization Membership Survey

Prior to finalizing their questions and proposals for the public survey, Committee members were given the option of sending out a private survey to their organization's membership or leadership board. The purpose was to gauge support within their own organization and also identify any immediate issues with their intended alternative proposal approach.

In total over 500 responses were received back with some Committee members electing to poll a handful of their organizations leadership, while others sent it out to a wider group of their organization's membership. The responses to these membership surveys were very illuminating and contributed to revisions on the final public survey.

Public Comment Survey

The Committee's online public comment survey was open at 12:32PM Saturday July 25, 2009 and closed at midnight July 31, 2009. Almost 6,000 individuals visited the survey with 4,069 submitting fully completed responses. Of these, around 1,300 individuals requested to be added to an email list for notifications of any additional surveys or progress updates.

A total of 113 DNR Wardens, administrative staff, and biologists participated as well.

Details of the survey results are included in the Appendix and will be added to the Committee website www.wiherdcontrol.org as they become available.



6. Other Factors and Considerations

Beyond the Committee's charge as assigned by the NRB, a majority of the Committee members felt that other factors and considerations specifically stated as being outside of the Committee's purview were related to the discussion and development of alternative herd control methods.

While the Committee was careful to omit discussion of these during its work process, several last minute sidebar motions at the final August 1, 2009 meeting were made to mention these as sidebars in the final report. One of these had a majority of members' support (6 in support 4 not in support) with the other sidebar motion gained the support of four committee members.

Both are included here to help readers understand other factors and considerations that may have indirectly influenced some Committee members' perspectives on developing alternative herd control measures. These sidebar motions were made to comment on topics outside the Committee's charge.

Both motions should be read as statements of those voting in support of the motion. Both were outside the NRB charge and fall outside the Committee's official scope of recommendations.

1. The first motion was supported by a majority of members (6 in support, 4 not in support):

"The committee honored the charge of the NRB by not considering further regulation of deer baiting and feeding in our discussions but it would be irresponsible for us to not point out that these practices are counterproductive to herd control efforts. Studies have shown that baiting does not harvest more deer and reduces deer movement during legal hunting hours. In addition baiting and feeding also contribute to increased herd productivity further compounding herd control efforts.

Unless deer baiting and feeding is addressed we will never resolve the issue of hunters seeing and harvesting deer and the resulting controversy with herd control seasons. We urge the NRB and DNR to use their statutory authority to the fullest extent to restrict deer baiting and feeding, and to continue to educate the public and the legislature on the negative effects of deer baiting and feeding."

2. The second motion that gained the support of four members (4 in favor and 6 not in support):

"With other concerns outside the scope of the committee charge now being voted upon as sidebars to the final report, we would make a motion for the Committee to acknowledge that hunter non-support of Earn-A-Buck and other herd reduction incentives is the result of many hunters feeling that population goals are set unreasonably low and that current population estimates inaccurately report larger populations that conflict with these hunters' personal experiences."



7. Committee Work Process and Website

The NRB Advisory Committee began work with a conference call June 17, 2009 and had its final meeting August 1, 2009. Committee members collaborated via their website through August 10, 2009 preparing their report to the NRB. This brief section provides an overview of the processes and tools used by the Committee to complete its work within the six and a half week period available.

In total, the eleven member Committee held six phone conferences, three in-person meetings, collaborated via a dedicated website www.wiherdcontrol.org, and conducted ten online surveys to gather comments from their respective organizations, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the general public, and members of the Committee.

Process Overview

Work began by assembling a list of previously proposed alternatives and adding additional concepts proposed by Committee members. This list was then ranked by Committee members along with conservation wardens, wildlife biologists, and the DNR Deer Committee based on effectiveness, enforceability, complexity for hunters and registration stations, potential conflicts with other groups, hunter acceptance, landowner acceptance, and administrative feasibility. Online surveys were used to narrow this list to provide a starting point for discussions.

Meeting discussions were used to decide the format of the Committee's recommendations. A season package proposal format was chosen to recommend both a season structure along with specific hunter and landowner incentives. Each Committee member was given the opportunity of posting a detailed season package(s) on the website for discussion before the Committee's second meeting. This produced eleven detailed proposals for consideration at the second meeting.

To ensure consistency and common understanding between members, work was done at the second meeting to begin drafting detailed descriptions of each hunting season and incentive proposed in member packages. Using these descriptions and the initial member proposals, the Committee drafted three preliminary season packages to solicit public input on the concepts being proposed.

These packages were first sent via online survey by Committee members to their organization's leadership and/or membership to help confirm their direction was consistent with their organization's viewpoints. Using the feedback gathered, the three preliminary packages were refined by different Committee working groups to be included in an online public comment survey process.

This public survey process included developing customized surveys to gather input from conservation wardens, wildlife biologists, and DNR administrative staff on enforceability, effectiveness, and feasibility. Results were shared with Committee members via website file attachments.

The final meeting along with online discussions was used to develop the Committee's recommendations.



Website and Other Collaboration Tools

The Committee's work would not have been possible without the use of the dedicated website at www.wiherdcontrol.org to share materials, member concepts, comments, and data from public survey activities. This work culminated with the posting of the Committee's draft report to the site that allowed members to collaborate on final wording and content prior to release.

The website also served as a conduit for public notices and updates on the Committee's activities. Meeting agendas, summaries, and materials were all posted in the public domain concurrently with Committee activities. Links to public surveys were provided along with introductory information to help provide a reference to respondents before submitting their input.

The website averaged around 700 visits per day with over July downloads of nearly 7GB of files.

Other collaboration tools included phone conferencing and online surveys.

The six phone conferences were important in preparing for in-person meetings and making decisions between these meetings. While typically not used to make final decisions, they were opportunities for members to share viewpoints and gain a sense of the Committee's direction.

Online surveys used internally by the Committee were a method to make group decisions, confirm the exact wording of prior decisions, and approve Committee outcomes.

Online surveys of the public and other groups were useful for gathering input rapidly for the Committee's consideration.

Public surveys were first 'test-driven' by Committee members allowing them to make changes and additions to the number of questions and the questions themselves. This approach had the benefit of ensuring the surveys answered Committee member questions. However, the short cycle time between meetings, surveys and the overall process did limit attempts to ensure survey designs were ideally suited for analytical reporting.

Summary

The website www.wiherdcontrol.org will remain available at least through December 2010 for public and Committee member review. Posting and editing access will be restricted following the Committee's delivery of its final report on August 12, 2009, but could be restored in the event the NRB directs the Committee to provide clarification or perform additional review of its work.



8. Appendix



Original List of Proposed Alternatives

The following table lists the original alternatives assembled and ranked at the beginning of the Committee Work Process.

These original alternatives were compiled from past studies including Deer 2000 and Beyond, Deer Streamlining Effort, other states, current and past practices, and new ideas from Committee members.



Earn-a-Buck and Herd Control Alternatives

Status Code Column:

C = considered by Committee majority

E = eliminated from consideration by Committee majority

			Status #	Deer Com DNR Deer Comm. Effectiveness of herd control	NRB Com Effectiveness of herd control	NRB Com Hunter Acceptance	NRB Com Landowner Acceptance	DNR Admin Administrative Feasibility	NRB Com Conflicts with other recreationalists	NRB Com Complexity for hunter/reg. station	Warden Complexity for hunter and registration station	Warden Conflicts with other recreationalists	Warden Enforceability	DNR Admin Costs of Implement- ing
Cost Incentives														
Free unlimited antlerless tags (as done in CWD Zone)	C	1		1.47	2.44	2.78	2.67		1.22	1.33	1.15	1.21	2.21	
Earn coupon toward cost of next license with each antlerless deer registered	E	2												
Earn free license next season for X # of antlerless deer registered	E	3												
Step approach for free license: X # of antlerless deer registered = gun or archery license, More antlerless deer = free Sportsmans license, More antlerless deer = free Conservation Patron's license	E	4												
Limited # of game farm hunts awarded to hunters that register X # antlerless deer	E	5												
Earn coupon toward income or property tax reduction for each antlerless deer registered from property	E	6												
Pay for each antlerless deer registered	E	7												
Prize drawing for one or more hunters from those who registered an antlerless deer	E	8												
Offer free antlerless tags for landowner distribution	C	9		1.16	2.00	2.22	2.67		1.22	1.67	1.85	1.60	1.83	
Harvest a marked antlerless deer (only noticeable after harvest) and win a free lifetime license, money, etc.	E	10												
Reduced cost or offer free antlerless-only license	E	11		1.37										
Gun Season Opportunities														
Annual 4-day antlerless October gun season statewide for those with antlerless tags	C	12		1.83	2.56	2.00	1.78		2.56	1.22	1.40	1.96	2.17	
Move Oct 4-day hunt back to late Oct instead of mid-Oct to coincide with increased deer movement	E	13												
4-day early November antlerless gun hunt beginning on a Thursday, instead of 4-day Oct. gun hunt	E	14												
4-day early November antlerless gun hunt beginning on a Thursday, in addition to existing 4-day Oct. gun hunt	E	15												
More short gun deer seasons for antlerless deer	E	16												
9-day antlerless October season instead of current 4-day season	E	17												
16-day gun season starting traditional opener	C	18		1.78	2.38	2.50	2.38		2.00	1.25	1.25	1.95	2.15	
16 day gun season beginning Sat. nearest Nov. 16th	C	19		2.00	2.22	1.67	1.67		1.78	1.33	1.42	2.15	2.13	
23-day gun season starting with traditional opener or 1 week earlier	E	20												
Gun season from traditional opener to end of archery season (early January)	E	21												
Keep gun season open until antlerless quota is reached, but no later than...	E	22												
7-9 day Holiday gun hunt (either sex) at end of year, in addition to existing season framework	C	23		1.67	2.00	2.22	1.89		2.78	1.44	1.77	2.34	2.06	
Gun hunt during the rut (either-sex) , in addition to current season framework	E	24												
Either-sex during a weekend during the rut, and antlerless-only during 9-day	E	25												
Spring gun deer hunt	E	26												
Daily bag limit for antlerless deer	E	27		1.44										
Lengthen muzzleloader season to include all of December	C	28		1.11	1.67	2.00	1.78		2.78	1.22	1.37	2.05	1.92	
Lengthen muzzleloader season to include all of December and all of January	E	29												

Earn-a-Buck and Herd Control Alternatives

Status Code Column:

C = considered by Committee majority

E = eliminated from consideration by Committee majority

	Status	#	Deer Com DNR Deer Comm. Effectiveness of herd control	NRB Com Effectiveness of herd control	NRB Com Hunter Acceptance	NRB Com Landowner Acceptance	DNR Admin Administrative Feasibility	NRB Com Conflicts with other recreationalists	NRB Com Complexity for hunter/reg. station	Warden Complexity for hunter and registration station	Warden Conflicts with other recreationalists	Warden Enforceability	DNR Admin Costs of Implement- ing
Muzzleloader hunt in October, in addition to existing Dec. muzzleloader hunt	C	30	1.33	2.11	2.11	2.00		2.33	1.33	2.06	2.39	2.01	
Muzzleloader hunt in October, instead of Dec. muzzleloader hunt	C	31		1.89	1.67	2.00		2.22	1.22	1.99	2.34	2.01	
Allow 16 & 17 year olds to participate in the Youth Hunt	E	32	1.28										
Youth hunt moved to early Nov. (rut)	E	33											
Longer youth hunt	E	34	1.11										
Archery Season Opportunities													
Lengthen archery season to include entire month of January (as done in metro units)	C	35	1.11	1.67	2.33	2.00		2.22	1.22	1.30	1.63	2.07	
Lengthen archery season by beginning on Sept. 1st	C	36	1.11	1.78	2.11	1.78		2.22	1.22	1.36	1.53	2.07	
Archery hunting allowed during 9-day gun season statewide	C	37	1.11	1.44	2.00	2.00		1.38	1.78	2.14	1.75	1.88	
Allow "Group Hunting" for archery hunters	E	38	1.17							2.14	1.75	1.87	
Several short archery seasons: Hunters apply for a particular season	E	39								2.14	1.75	1.87	
Crossbows legal as archery weapon for all	E	40	1.61										
Firearm Opportunities													
Rifles in shotgun zones	E	41	1.78										
Allow magnifying scopes during muzzleloader season	E	42											
Buck Hunting Restrictions													
Antlerless only hunt for all seasons	C	43	2.11	2.63	1.13	1.25		1.13	1.25	1.93	1.82	2.04	
Limited buck tags by drawing and unlimited antlerless tags for the rest of hunters who did not draw a buck tag	C	44	2.00	2.11	1.22	1.56		1.11	2.00	2.47	1.80	2.04	
Buck tags cost extra, except for herd control and regular units	E	45											
Bucks allowed that meet antler point minimums	C	46	1.06	1.78	1.56	1.56		1.22	2.56	2.74	1.63	1.82	
Bucks allowed that meet antler spread minimums	E	47											
Limited buck hunting days for archery and gun seasons	E	48											
Limit one buck per year between archery and gun licenses.	C	49	1.22	2.11	1.56	1.44		1.22	1.78	2.17	1.56	2.03	
Earn-a-Buck Revisions													
Owe-a-doe – can't get another buck license or register another buck until you shoot an antlerless deer or have 2-3 seasons to shoot a doe before cited for non-compliance	E	50											
First buck allowed (without EAB), then extra buck tags earned after shooting antlerless deer (unlimited EAB).	E	51											
Unlimited EAB - First buck must also be earned by harvesting an antlerless deer first (used in CWD units)	E	52											
Earn-a-buck stickers don't expire	C	53	1.50	1.44	2.11	2.00		1.11	2.00	1.60	1.18	2.04	
Transferrable earn-a-buck stickers	C	54	1.61	1.44	2.00	2.00		1.11	1.89	2.44	1.31	1.89	
Once-in-a-lifetime buck tag that can be used in EAB units without shooting an antlerless deer first	E	55											
EAB in a unit only when population is at least 50% over goal in previous winter	E	56											
Also offer EAB stickers for antlerless deer harvested in non-EAB units (Herd Control and Regular)	E	57											
No EAB requirements for youths ages 12 - ?, and for seniors ages 65+.	C	58	1.33	1.33	2.11	2.11		1.00	1.67	2.19	1.41	1.78	
No EAB requirements for first-time hunters, regardless of age	C	59		1.44	2.33	2.33		1.11	1.67	2.17	1.35	1.76	

Earn-a-Buck and Herd Control Alternatives

Status Code Column:

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	Status	#	Deer Com DNR Deer Comm. Effectiveness of herd control	NRB Com Effectiveness of herd control	NRB Com Hunter Acceptance	NRB Com Landowner Acceptance	DNR Admin Administrative Feasibility	NRB Com Conflicts with other recreationalists	NRB Com Complexity for hunter/reg. station	Warden Complexity for hunter and registration station	Warden Conflicts with other recreationalists	Warden Enforceability	DNR Admin Costs of Implement- ing
EAB for 2-3 consecutive years, then a one-year break	E	60											
Continue EAB, but allow hunters the option of purchasing EAB authorization if they prefer. For example, regular license fee \$24 + \$100 buck sticker for those who want to avoid EAB.	E	61											
2-for-1 EAB: antlerless deer registered earns the hunter a buck sticker valid for the current year and another valid for the next year	E	62											
Private Land													
Antlerless quota/tags/season on private lands only	C	63	1.56	2.11	1.89	2.00		1.56	2.11	2.53	1.78	1.78	
Landowner permits to extend season through winter (as with CWD Zone)	E	64											
Other													
Donation program enhancements - more donation programs running, more participating processors and drop-off sites	C	65		2.11	2.89	2.89		1.22	1.33	1.14	1.03	2.30	
Allow commercial markets for wild venison	E	66											
Hunter Recruitment and Retention programs	C	67		2.11	2.67	2.56		1.22	1.25	1.42	1.33	2.08	
Super tag for hunter and landowners	C	68		2.11	2.48	2.48		1.33	1.56	2.50	1.79	1.87	
Income tax incentives both hunters and landowners access	E	69											
Limited MFL Close Acreage	C	70		1.89	2.44	1.33		1.22	1.00	2.00	2.07	1.96	
MFL-HC-required antlerless harvest	C	71		2.22	2.44	1.56		1.56	1.67	2.54	2.07	1.84	
Public land antlerless quotas	C	72		1.56	1.67	2.00		1.22	2.00	2.58	2.03	1.67	
Antler Restrictions by DMU -(public determined)	C	73		1.67	2.11	2.00		1.25	2.22	2.80	1.84	1.68	
Ag Damage access (pre-Act 82)	C	74		2.44	2.89	1.67		1.56	1.33	1.98	1.86	2.07	
Antler Restriction /combo tag - MI as example	C	75		1.78	1.78	2.11		1.33	2.44	2.62	1.65	1.80	
15day reg gun season (Nov 15-30)	C	76		2.11	1.33	1.33		1.33	1.11	1.29	1.65	2.32	
shoot first buy tag later	E	77											
Bonus bucks	C	78		1.78	2.22	2.22		1.11	1.89	2.43	1.75	1.78	
Additional free antlerless tags w/purchase	C	79		2.44	2.78	2.78		1.22	1.33	1.48	1.21	2.22	
Landowner liability	C	80		1.56	2.56	1.67		1.33	1.00	1.88	1.75	1.80	
Advanced hunter education certificate	C	81		1.22	1.78	2.00		1.00	1.22	1.93	1.43	2.08	
Hunter PR campaign to increase access to public and private land	C	82		1.67	2.56	1.89		1.11	1.00	1.43	1.55	2.00	
Increase access to public land	C	83		2.33	2.78	2.78		1.78	1.22	1.41	1.75	2.14	

Original List of Season Components Defined

Below is a complete list of the season components originally broken down and defined by the Committee during its July 11, 2009 meeting. These went through additional revision and ranking processes as the final proposals were developed and put up for public, conservation warden, wildlife biologist and Committee member comments. This list provides insight into the options developed and defined for each season component.

Season	Description
Regular Firearm	16 – day regular gun season statewide. Traditional opening date – Saturday before Thanksgiving.
	16 – day regular gun season statewide. Traditional opening date – Saturday before Thanksgiving. Antler restrictions after Thanksgiving through the remainder of all deer seasons during that year.
	16 – day regular gun season statewide. Annual opener the Saturday closest to November 17th. In three years of six the gun season would open on the traditional opener. In three years of six the gun season would open one week earlier than the traditional opener.
	9-Day Firearm Season Statewide. There would be a 16-Day Firearm Season in Herd Control Units only (in addition to other herd control structures). Traditional opening date.
	No change to deer season structures. Leave herd control and earn-a-buck system in place as it currently is.
Archery	Unchanged archery opening date - Saturday closest September 15. Statewide. Continuous archery hunt through the gun seasons, ending the second Sunday in January. Antlerless only during antlerless only firearm seasons.
	September 1st archery season opening date. Statewide. Closed during the 16 day gun, ending the second Sunday in January. Antlerless only during antlerless only firearm seasons.
	September 1st archery season opening date. Statewide. Continuous archery hunt through the gun seasons, ending the second Sunday in January. Antlerless only during antlerless only firearm seasons.
	Archery closing at the end of January in herd control units.
Youth Firearm	Youth firearm hunt. Either Sex. Statewide. Second weekend of October - coincidental with muzzle loader hunt and herd control hunt. Antlerless Only. Saturday through Wednesday.
Muzzleloader	Muzzle loader hunt. Statewide. Second weekend of October – coincidental with youth hunt and herd control hunt. Antlerless only. Saturday through Wednesday
October Herd Control	October firearm herd control hunt. Herd control units only. Antlerless Only. Second weekend of October– coincidental with youth hunt and herd control hunt. Antlerless only. Saturday through Wednesday.
December	December muzzle loader season. Statewide. Opening the Monday following close of 16 day firearm season or a week after the close of a 9-day firearm season. Five days either sex, followed by five days antlerless only. December firearm season concurrent with the five days of antlerless only.
	December muzzle loader season. Statewide. Opening the Monday following close of 16 day firearm season or a week after the close of a 9-day firearm season. Ten days either sex. No December firearm antlerless hunt (t-zone).
Holiday Hunt	Holiday hunt. South of 64. Herd control units only. Opening December 24 running for 10 days. Antlerless only.
	Holiday hunt. South of 64. Herd control units only. Opening December 24 running for 10 days. Either sex.
	Holiday hunt. South of 64. Herd control units only. Opening December 24 running for 10 days. Either sex with antler restrictions.

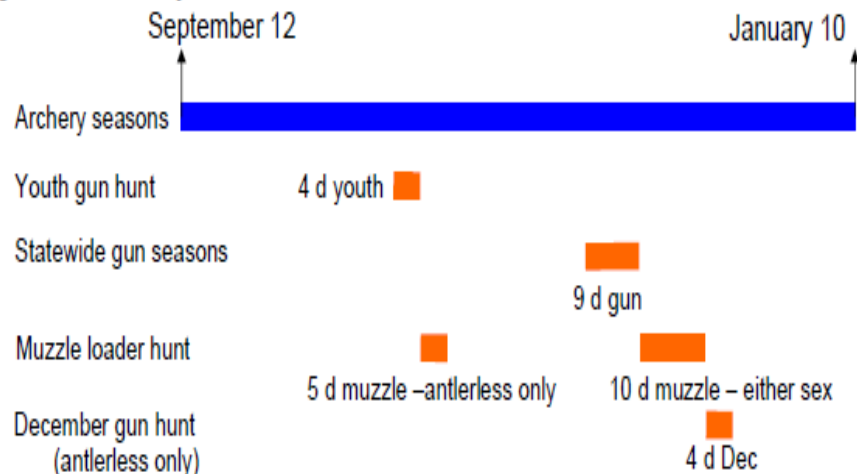
Season Packages Submitted for Public Review and Comment

The three packages on the following pages were submitted to public comments via an online survey that was open from July 25, 2009 through midnight July 31, 2009. They are provided here to offer insight on the development of the final Committee proposals and a context to review public comments from the survey.

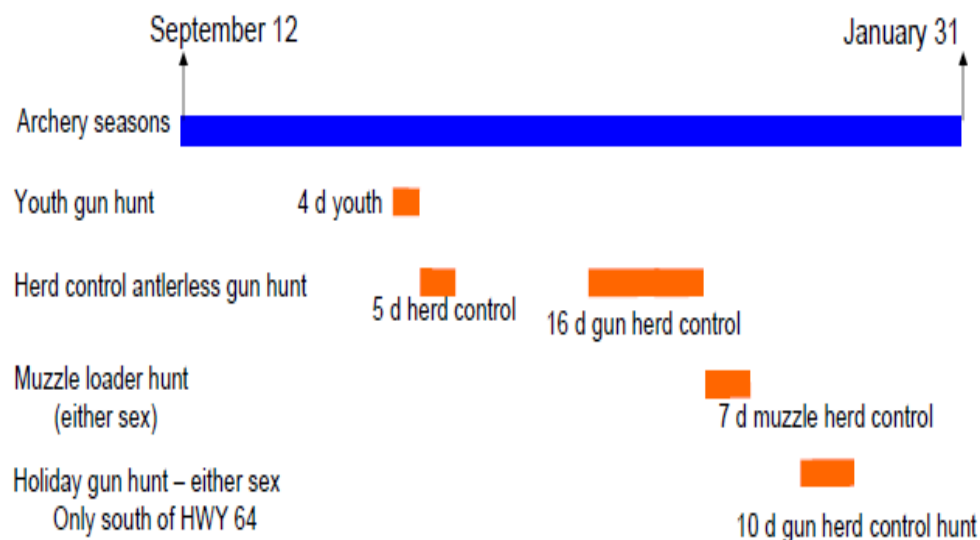
Each of these proposals was developed by a separate self-selected working group interested in exploring the season package options included in their proposal. Additionally, each group was allowed to add follow-up questions to the survey to gather insight into various aspects or alternatives to their package. Because questions were formulated by multiple groups working within a short timeframe, the final survey response options did vary package to package.

9 Day Statewide with 16 Day Herd Control

Regular Season 9 Day Non Herd Control Units



Herd Control Units ONLY 16 Day



Regular Season (9 Day Traditional Opener)

This group of season components applies to the regular season and non-herd control units.

Main Season: Statewide 9-day firearm season opening on the Traditional Opener.

Archery Season

The archery season continues to open statewide on the Saturday nearest September 15th and would now extend to the second Sunday in January. Archery would continue to be antlerless only during any antlerless only firearm seasons.

Youth Firearm Hunt Season

4-day, statewide, firearm Youth Hunt starting on the second weekend in October. Either Sex.

Muzzle Loader Hunt Seasons

10 day December either sex muzzleloader season in all regular, non-herd control units, starting the day after the close of the regular firearm season.

October Hunt

4-day October muzzleloader season antlerless-only statewide opening immediately after the 4-day statewide Youth Firearm Hunt.

December Hunt Season

4-day antlerless firearm hunt in all regular, non-herd control units, starting the day after the 10-day muzzle loader season.

Herd Control Unit Season Components (16 Day Traditional Opener)

The herd control unit season is defined by the group of components below.

Herd Control Unit Main Season: 16-day firearm season in herd control units only. Traditional Opener.

Herd Control Unit Archery Season Extension

Extended archery season to January 31st in Herd Control Units state-wide. Either-sex

Youth Firearm Hunt Season

4-day, statewide, firearm Youth Hunt starting on the second weekend in October. Either Sex.

Herd Control Unit October Hunt Season

Herd Control Units 5-day October firearm season antlerless-only in Herd Control Units beginning the day after the 4-day statewide October Youth Firearm Hunt. Muzzleloaders permitted but no dedicated October muzzle loader season in herd control units.

Herd Control Unit December Season

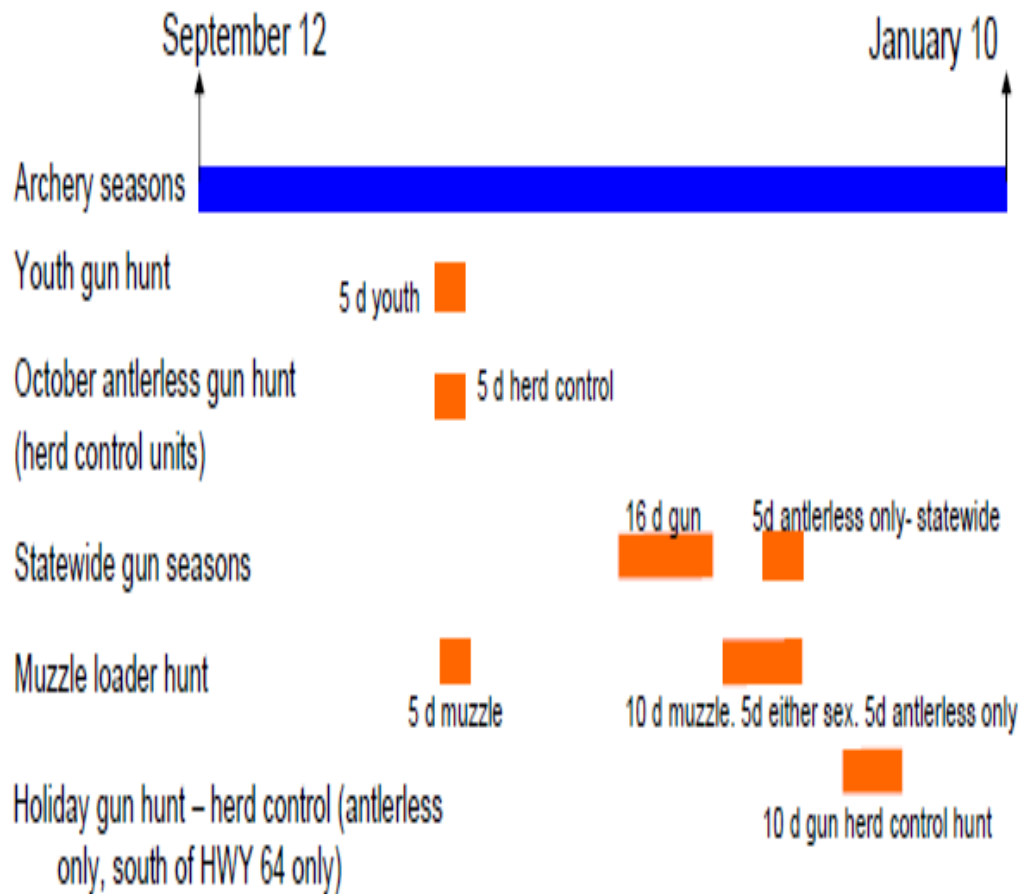
Herd Control Unit December muzzle loader season. Either sex, 7-day, herd control only. Opening the Monday after the close of the 16 day herd control unit firearm season. NO 4-day antlerless firearm hunt in herd control units as it would overlap the muzzleloader season.

Herd Control Unit Holiday Hunt Season

Herd Control Units 10-day Holiday Hunt season either sex for firearms in herd control units south of Hwy 64 ONLY! Opens December 24th.

9 day regular season with 16 day season only in herd control units. Both open on traditional day. This season and incentive package is an attempt to effectively reduce deer herd over population by focusing a 16-day firearm season on over populated Herd Control Units. By limiting the 16 day season to herd control units, the working group was hoping to balance the benefits of a 16 day season with the reluctance of hunters and landowners in units at or below goals to see another week added to the regular season in their areas.

16 Day Statewide Traditional Opener



Main Season

16 – day regular gun season statewide. Traditional opening date – Saturday before Thanksgiving.

Archery Season

Unchanged archery opening date - Saturday closest September 15. Statewide. Continuous archery hunt through the gun seasons, ending the second Sunday in January. Antlerless only during antlerless only firearm seasons.

Youth Firearm Hunt Season

Either Sex. Statewide. Second weekend of October – 5 days coincident with muzzleloader hunt and herd control hunt. Antlerless Only. Saturday through Wednesday.

Muzzleloader Hunt Season

Statewide. Second weekend of October –5 days coincident with youth hunt and herd control hunt. Antlerless only. Saturday through Wednesday

October Firearm Herd Control Season

Herd control units only. Second weekend of October– 5 days coincident with youth hunt and muzzleloader hunt. Antlerless only. Saturday through Wednesday.

December Muzzleloader Season

December muzzleloader season. Statewide. Opening the Monday following close of 16 day firearm season or a week after the close of a 9-day firearm season. Five days either sex, followed by 5 days antlerless only. December firearm season concurrent with the 5 days of antlerless.

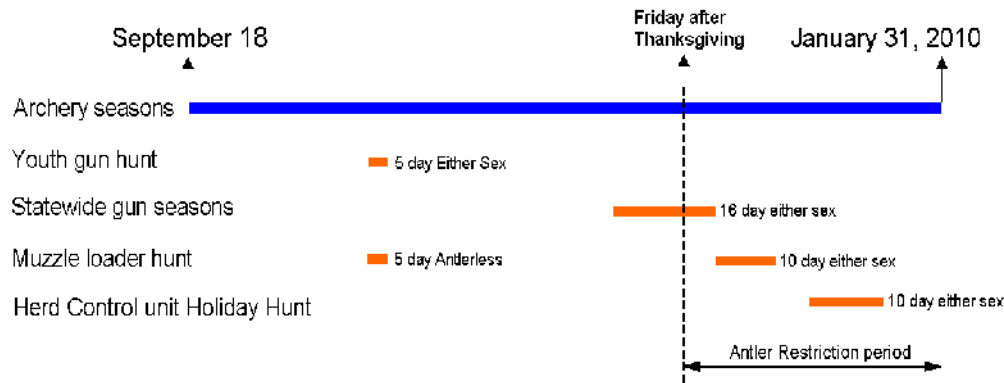
Holiday Hunt Season

Holiday hunt. South of 64. Herd control units only. Opening December 24 running for 10 days. Antlerless only. Any legal weapon.

The Committee was charged with coming up with a deer harvest system that is an alternative to the current system which includes Earn-a-Buck. Thus, the new proposed system must have components that provide significant increased harvest potential to replace the effectiveness of Earn-a-Buck. When you review this and the other alternatives, vote on them in direct comparison to the current system including Earn-a-Buck, (each as an alternative to the other). Also, please consider that the elements of this package are closely tied together and are necessary for it to work as a package. As an example, increasing the November gun deer season to 16 days, which will increase deer harvest and help off-set the loss of effectiveness of not having Earn-a-Buck would have a negative impact on the current muzzleloader season (which follows right after the nine-day gun deer season). To compensate for this loss to muzzleloader hunters, this proposal provides for a 5 day October muzzleloader season contemporaneous with the October youth and herd reduction hunts. Scheduling these hunts at the same time, minimizes the impact on other October hunters.

Targeted Harvest Incentive Package

Targeted Harvest Incentive Package, season chronology



Main Season

16 – day regular firearm season statewide. Traditional opening date – Saturday before Thanksgiving. Antler restrictions starting the Friday after Thanksgiving day through the remainder of all deer seasons. Antler restrictions defined to mean a minimum number of points and/or spread before a buck could be harvested.

Archery Season

Unchanged archery season opening date - Saturday closest September 15. Statewide. Continuous archery hunt through the 16 day firearms season, ending the second Sunday in January. with antler restrictions beginning the Friday after Thanksgiving and throughout the remainder of the archery season.

Extended archery season: Archery season closing January 31 in herd control units.

Youth Firearm Hunt Season

Either Sex. 5 day, Statewide. Opening the second Saturday of October. NO antler restriction.

Muzzle Loader Hunt Season

Antlerless only, 5 day, Statewide. Second Saturday of October – coincidental with youth hunt.

December Muzzle Loader Season

December muzzle loader season: Either sex, 10 day, Statewide. Opening the Monday following close of regular firearm season. No December firearm antlerless only hunt (t-zone) with antler restrictions.

Holiday Hunt Season

Holiday firearm hunt: Either sex, 10 days, herd control units only, South of Hwy.64. Opening December 24 with antler restrictions.

In the opinion of the working group developing this proposal, the best alternative to Earn-a-Buck and unpopular Herd Control methods is to simply provide hunters the tools, access, opportunity and incentives necessary to keep populations at goal in a regular season framework. While it may be assumed that extended seasons, unlimited antlerless tags and multiple buck opportunities will result in higher harvest, the working group is of the opinion that the contrary has been demonstrated in the CWD Units. When policies are implemented that ignore the diverse reasons why deer are hunted, privatization of deer increases dramatically, increasing the disparity of deer dispersal across the landscape. We feel this phenomenon is compounded in DMU's with significant areas of public land. The package incorporated in the following pages offers a variety of opportunities and incentives that strike a balance with the diverse interests of deer hunters that will be supported by landowners and other stakeholders. It seeks to minimize over-harvest potential on public land while focusing efforts on private land and antlerless deer in a regular season framework.

Incentives

Antlerless tag allocation herd control units, PRIVATE land: Free, unlimited, private land, antlerless tags to be issued over the counter for all herd control units.

Antlerless tag allocation herd control units, PUBLIC land: Unit specific, limited, public land quotas and tag allocation to be established for Herd Control units. Antlerless tags would be free and issued the same as regular unit bonus tags.

Herd Control seasons trigger: Herd Control seasons in a Unit that remains 20% over goal would not be implemented until AFTER two years of free herd control tags.

Bonus Buck incentive: Only in herd control units, during all seasons, registering 3 antlerless deer would qualify a hunter for one extra buck tag. Limit one Bonus buck tag per year. Not weapon specific. Would carry over to the following year.

Statewide Uniformity: To reduce hunters leaving the CWD Management Zone due to unpopular herd control methods it is necessary to apply seasons and herd control uniformly across the state including the CWD management Zone. Antler restrictions will increase hunter effort on the older age class bucks which are known to have the highest rate of CWD.

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Addendum Committee Member Perspectives

The attached summaries were optional and reflect the unique views of each organization represented on the Committee. They are provided to help readers understand the various perspectives involved with developing the Committee's outcomes.

Quality Deer Management Association
University of Wisconsin - Madison
Wisconsin Bowhunters Association
Wisconsin Conservation Congress
Wisconsin Deer Hunters Association
Wisconsin Hunters Rights Coalition
Wisconsin Wildlife Federation
Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association

Quality Deer Management Association

www.QDMA.com

Overview of Group or Community

The QDMA is an international nonprofit wildlife conservation organization dedicated to ethical hunting, sound deer management and preservation of the deer-hunting heritage. The QDMA's mission is to promote sustainable, high-quality white-tailed deer populations, wildlife habitats, and ethical hunting experiences through education, research, and management in partnership with hunters, landowners, natural resource professionals, and the public.

Among QDMA's 53,000 members are more than 3,000 of the nation's leading wildlife and forestry professionals. As such, QDMA is widely regarded as the most respected whitetail organization in the United States. Wisconsin is home to over 2,000 QDMA members, 8 local Branches and a State Chapter. These Branches conduct numerous educational events annually, and Wisconsin QDMA members help manage over a quarter million acres for white-tailed deer and other wildlife species.

The QDMA's ongoing commitment to education and stewardship was formally recognized in 2001 when it became the only whitetail organization ever to be awarded the prestigious "Group Achievement Award" from The Wildlife Society – the parent body of nearly 10,000 wildlife professionals in North America.

Lessons Learned from the NRB Committee Process

QDMA's primary focus has always been on education, research, and on-the-ground management. The QDMA has a long history of working with Wisconsin sportsmen and women, as well as the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). We welcomed the opportunity to participate in reviewing the Wisconsin DNR's deer management plan as part of our continued involvement in the State's wildlife agencies' programs.

This Committee's review process brought together many different perspectives and interests to consider.

QDMA Specific Input

The QDMA's biological staff routinely works with state wildlife agencies on their deer management programs. As a result, hundreds of thousands of hunters and millions of acres of public and private lands are managed under quality deer management guidelines. The QDMA has also actively partnered with numerous federal and state wildlife agencies, forest products companies, conservation organization, and other groups to improve white-tailed deer and habitat management programs.

Based on our experience and background, we support the Committee's work to develop alternatives to Earn-A-Buck (EAB) while continuing to promote quality deer management guidelines that encourage sustainable, high-quality white-tailed deer populations, wildlife habitats, and ethical hunting experiences. The balance between these is not easy to achieve and we believe more work is needed to develop consistent measurements of deer population, habitat conditions, and hunter experiences.

QDMA Specific Recommendations

Preserving our deer-hunting heritage is a priority for QDMA. Each year QDMA conducts numerous events for youth and women as well as supporting numerous worthy organizations like Farmers and Hunters Feeding the Hungry, the Paralyzed Veterans Association, and the Catch-A-Dream Foundation.

As part of our recommendations, we encourage DNR efforts that provide educational programs, publications, and other opportunities for hunters and non-hunters to learn more about deer management practices.

University of Wisconsin - Madison

I will begin with a preamble and end with some more general perspectives. They are based on my reading of the recent scientific literature on managing deer. References have been omitted for readability and brevity but I can provide them if requested.

Preamble

Managers usually regulate hunter **opportunity** by manipulating days of hunting allowed, daily or seasonal harvest limits, hunting equipment or methods permitted (e.g. weapons used, bait, hounds), age and sex of animals harvested (based on physical features), and hunter numbers or effort. In the case of overabundance, managers use these regulatory techniques to increase hunter opportunity in the hopes that increased opportunity will enable a larger percentage of individual hunters to reach their harvest thresholds (defined as the maximum number of deer they are willing to process for their own use) so that collectively they harvest more deer. Less common is the use of **incentives** that motivate hunters to exceed their harvest thresholds. Bounties paid for verified kills of predators (e.g. wolves) are obvious examples of harvest incentives but venison donation programs also incentivize hunters with the opportunity to do community service (e.g. provide meat to a food pantry).

Regulation of recreational hunting is the manager's primary tool in addressing ungulate overabundance and harvest of antlerless deer is required for population control. However, the effectiveness of this tool is threatened by recent convergence of increasing deer populations, decreasing retention and recruitment of hunters, and declining social acceptance of hunting as population management technique. In addition, many hunters are unwilling to acknowledge that overabundance of deer is a problem where they hunt and are unwilling to participate fully in management efforts directed at population reduction – especially if they perceive population reduction as a threat to their deer hunting. Consequently, researchers have questioned whether recreational deer hunting can provide adequate control of free-ranging deer populations over large areas. A key problem is that increasing hunting opportunity stops being effective when demand for venison is saturated. Recognizing that increasing hunter opportunity may result in diminishing returns in harvest, some have explicitly called for more research into use of incentive-based approaches.

Managers in Wisconsin have been implementing a hunting program that creates an incentive to harvest antlerless deer out of hunters' desires to harvest antlered males known as earn-a-buck (EAB). Though effective in increasing the harvest of antlerless deer, EAB actually restricts hunter opportunity to harvest male deer somewhat and consequently its use has generated discontent among some hunters and antipathy towards management. On average, EAB more than doubles the antlerless harvest relative to Wisconsin's Standard season and is twice as effective as the T-Zone seasons used during the past decade. EAB is a very effective tool!

The NRB's charge to the committee may have been impossible because the committee was asked to find an alternative to EAB that was both effective and acceptable to hunters. For many hunters, effectiveness relative to EAB (getting high antlerless kill, killing more deer than they want too, population reduction) is simply not acceptable because they want to see abundant deer and want to be free to harvest deer without feeling pressured to harvest deer differently than they would otherwise.

With this in mind:

1. Changing season structures will have only a minor effect. The effect could be positive if liberalized seasons put more hunters, particularly firearm hunters, in the woods for longer periods of time.

Nonetheless, seasons create or restrict opportunity and hunters in Wisconsin have not been clamoring for more opportunity, which indicates a level of satisfaction, suggesting that most hunters secure as much venison as they want to. We are at the point where additional opportunity will only result in ever-diminishing increases in harvest.

2. Strong incentives to harvest antlerless deer are critical to achieving effectiveness approaching that of EAB. EAB was successful because it created an incentive out of the primary icon of deer hunting culture – the buck. After serving on the committee and participating in the discussions I cannot think of a realistic approach that can be as effective as EAB. The best that can be done is to pick a strong incentive that more hunters will find acceptable (an EAB-lite perhaps) and couple it with other incentives and season structure changes with positive effects so that incrementally managers can begin to approach the effectiveness of EAB.
 3. Its time to stop baiting and feeding. Research in Wisconsin suggests that baiting has negligible impacts on the efficiency of hunters. That said, research also shows that the deer restrict their activity and travel patterns in the presence of a bait pile and thus are likely less vulnerable to hunters. The bigger effect of baiting is that it probably restricts the movements and activities of hunters – thereby reducing the rates at which deer and hunters are running into each other in the woods. Hunting aside, there's evidence in Wisconsin that the addition of highly nutritious supplemental food in the form of feeding (and to a lesser extent baiting) is artificially elevating the productivity of Wisconsin's deer herd in many areas. This works directly counter to management efforts at herd control.
 4. Population goals and triggers for increased harvest efforts are biological decisions and those decisions should remain with the trained biologists. Wisconsin's wildlife professionals are among the best-trained and most conscientious anywhere. Deer management is not intuitive. Deer management decisions are made in good faith using a process that is rigorous, transparent and responsive to public trust obligations that extend beyond recreational hunting. Hunters need to be part of the discussion, but hunter perceptions and expectations need to be managed as well.
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Wisconsin Bowhunters Association

Members of this committee were charged with finding effective alternatives to Earn-A-Buck that would be acceptable to hunters and landowners. Finding an effective alternative to EAB cannot be accomplished without a better understanding of what EAB means to many hunters. This is important since it is the hunter's objections to EAB that led to its demise and the creation of this committee. EAB forces hunters to do something they fiercely object too, the mandated killing of deer they hold in high regard when they do not see the need to "overkill" local deer populations. It was not the EAB tool that hunters objected to. The EAB tool just became the logical villain. What deer hunters most object to are what they perceive as the negative effects of EAB. Hunters believe that EAB had adverse effects on the Department's ability to accurately estimate deer populations. This led to increased hunter frustration and distrust in agency estimates. The public would be justified in such an assessment because that is the same warning given by the SAK audit of 2006. An additional complaint is that EAB brings the herd to over winter goals that deer hunters do not support. Hunters also felt EAB was over used or was abused by the department. Knowing the reasons hunters object to EAB is an important step in the process of developing EAB alternatives which are to be both effective and acceptable. Based on hunters concerns, finding an effective alternative that is done on a voluntary basis is an untenable task.

Committee members understand that game managers have an obligation to bring the herd to goal. We also understand that hunters, especially those that own land, also have management goals and their goals and values are equally important. Recent surveys have shown that most hunters do not share the same goals nor values as game managers, meaning one half of the deer management team is seeking ways to reduce the herd, while the other half is actively taking steps to promote and encourage population growth. This long standing disagreement over what is an acceptable number of deer on the landscape makes voluntary herd reduction especially challenging because when hunters see deer populations drop to levels they neither support nor accept, they will stop harvesting deer. At the same time, they are being told that they are in an overpopulation condition. When this standoff reached its peak, hunters stated that they would close their lands to hunting until populations rebound to levels they find acceptable. This situation is further aggravated by hunters concerns with the growing numbers of wolves, bear, coyote and other predators leading them to believe that population goals need to be increased to counter the effects of predators on the deer herd.

To the detriment of this committee's efforts, we were not allowed to address the issues I have laid out thus far. Population models/estimates and their credibility, as well as over winter goals, predation, baiting and CWD were off limits in our deliberations. Our incredibly short time frame and narrow focus did not allow the committee enough time nor breadth to address these key issues, which are the real source of frustrations for both hunters and game managers. We were allowed only discussion of methods and incentives to get hunters to harvest more deer. This goal I feel we could not reach under the constraints placed on the committee, but it was certainly not due to a lack of effort on the part of committee members who were all dedicated to this cause.

In spite of the limits of time and topic during actual meetings, some members took it upon themselves to evaluate and investigate reasons for hunter dissatisfaction in an effort to help them come up with ideas for alternatives. During my own examinations, I found that hunter concerns about predation were generally localized to hunters in Northern regions, indicating a need for DMU specific recommendations rather than statewide management prescriptions, while population estimates and goals were of statewide concern to hunters which I have already addressed. Lastly was a review of baiting. I felt this topic deserved further consideration to see if there was a correlation between baiting and EAB usage to address the question: "Is baiting causing the need for EAB?" I looked at the areas of the state where baiting was practiced, as well as where EAB has been most widely used. I reviewed the most recent years of 2006, 2007 and 2008 since EAB usage was at its peak during that time and baiting bans had already been in place for several years in these units. Since 2003, the number of bait ban counties has increased to 28 meaning 39% of the state does not allow baiting. This statistic indicates that baiting is not a statewide issue.

During the years evaluated, data suggests that in the South, where baiting has been banned for over a half decade, EAB usage was very high. Conversely, in the North, where baiting is most prevalent, EAB has seldom, if ever been used (especially north of Hwy 64). Hunter complaints of not seeing and harvesting deer were a statewide concern that did not correspond with specific counties or DMU's regardless of baiting laws. North or South, baiting or not, I could find no direct correlation between baiting and EAB usage, despite suggestions that hunter acceptance of a statewide baiting ban would lead to a reduction or elimination of the EAB management tool.

After evaluating the issues, it appears evident that the root cause of hunter's dissatisfaction lies with them not seeing and harvesting deer simply because there are fewer deer available to see and harvest. This is compounded by the frustrations of being mandated to harvest more deer and being told there are too many deer. Hunters will find little acceptance in measures this committee recommends if those measures further reduce local deer herds to what they view as "unacceptable" levels. Getting hunters to accept voluntary methods to kill more deer to reach a population goal they do not support is what led hunters to seek legislative intervention and the creation of this committee. This also led to land closures as hunters felt that was their only recourse. If this committee recommends management prescriptions that have the same effects as EAB, our efforts will have been in vain, which is why I feel this committee was set on an implausible mission from the start. Despite the fact that individual members took it upon themselves to address the root causes for hunter dissatisfaction, limitations prevented them from discussing their finding which left this committee to engage in little more than a brief brainstorming effort, lacking any detailed evaluation or analysis of the recommendations made.

In the end, a primary season package was developed by the committee and agreed upon by the slimmest majority. Unfortunately, doubts arise that hunters will accept such a package, both from herd reduction standpoint and because it suggests moving the date of the gun season opener from the traditional date. That alone may doom this package from a hunter acceptance standpoint. Concerns also arise due to the committee's stance to support a package aimed at herd reduction on a statewide level rather than a plan that focuses efforts on only those areas needing reduction. If this committee is to suggest alternatives to a management prescription that was used at the DMU level, the suggested alternatives should also be unit specific. With many areas of the State, especially north of Hwy 64, at or below goal, hunters will question the decision to levy such a burden on them but our time frame did not allow any discussion addressing safeguards against over harvest as a result of making recommendations statewide. The committee did however formulate incentives that may be useful. Providing opportunity for hunters to harvest deer in areas where their observations indicate high deer numbers should certainly be encouraged. Providing incentives for those harvests would also boost support.

Addressing and working to rectify the considerable differences in the goals and values of hunters and game managers is where efforts should be focused, if for no other reason than to get the two parties communicating the reasons for the positions they hold and to attempt to bridge the divide that currently exists. If resources are not already being directed to such a cause, they should be, or the adversarial relationship between the parties involved will forever exist. Many hunters view the current situation as more of a master and servant relationship rather than a game management team working together towards a common objective. Until this is addressed, I have serious doubts that inserting these new management prescriptions or incentives will be beneficial, since they do little to address the impasse that currently exists. This issue has little to do with science and biology and more to do with the human dynamics of game management. This is more about managing hunters than managing deer herds. Until hunters and game managers reach agreement, or at least an understanding, on goals and population estimates, management will forever stall and we will see increases in legislative involvement, land closures and hunters opting out all together due to frustration.

Since we were tasked with making recommendations, I will leave readers of our report with this. Take the time to read the report called "Deer managers and deer hunters in Wisconsin: Irreconcilable differences?" by Dr. Robert Holsman, Associate Professor of Wildlife College of Natural Resources University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. It was added to the list of reading material for this committee and can be found at:

<http://www.uwsp.edu/cnr/Wildlife/faculty/Holsman/webpage.aspx#research>

I'd like to thank many of the members of this committee that were able to put forth an honest effort and separate themselves from personal agendas in order to deliver the message of the organizations they represented and for their efforts and commitment to our task. Thanks also to our chair and facilitator for their hard work and long hours as well as the members of the public who attended meetings and participated in the online survey.

Ron Kulas
Wisconsin Bowhunters Association

Overview of Group or Community

The Wisconsin Conservation Congress (WCC) is the only “advisory body” in the State where citizens elect delegates from all 72 counties to represent their interests in natural resources. This is accomplished by working with the Natural Resources Board (NRB) and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR).

The State Conservation Commission (the predecessor of the NRB) created the Wisconsin Conservation Congress seventy-five years ago, in 1934, to provide Wisconsin citizens with a venue for contributing input and exchanging concerns on conservation issues. Legislation was signed in 1972, legally recognizing the WCC to provide citizens with a liaison between the NRB and the WDNR. (Statute 15.348)

Our Mission includes working with citizens, organizations, and educators on matters related to the management and enjoyment of Wisconsin’s natural resources. The WCC also considers citizen submitted resolutions on matters pertaining to the management of natural resources including, as in this case, deer herd management.

Lessons Learned from the NRB Special EAB Advisory Committee Process

Our committee was composed of eleven individuals from around the state. Most were active long-time deer hunters and as such, each member had developed his own unique perspective of deer management. Although the time frame for our consideration was relatively short, members were able to pull up decades of experience and knowledge. It was apparent that each member had spent years of time thinking about these deer issues.

There was definitely member frustration with the inability to get everything desired for the group they represented. But, in this process of collaboration and alliance building, the resulting hybrid packages are probably weighted to address the concerns of many, not just those of various narrow special interest groups.

Building coalitions to advance the developing season packages involved nearly every aspect of the political arena and became very grueling and demanding. Stress levels were high, personal agendas often surfaced, but thanks to everyone’s overall concern for achieving our goal, we maintained fairly respectable behavior within the committee.

The charge of our committee was very narrow, but in retrospect, had it been broader, we probably couldn’t have put out a product given the time constraints and huge potential of topics to cover. The use of a facilitator provided us with focus during some very confusing moments and also provided us with many tools to help us wade through the “chaff” while deliberating our decisions. The use of electronic surveys, both of our private organizations and the general public, helped us gather comments and perspectives that proved to be very helpful.

Committee Specific Input

Finding an effective management tool to replace a very effective, yet presumably unpopular EAB, was very difficult. Added to that was the task of having sufficient hunter and landowner support. Most members felt that effectiveness needed to come first and foremost. Secondly, we were probably going to have a message that some hunters and/or landowners wouldn’t care to hear. There is no way to please everyone all the time.

Early on, it was apparent that there was no single “silver bullet” to replace EAB. The answer would probably be a combination of several components working together. Years of harvest data pointed to the logical conclusion that offering more gun hunting opportunity would help, plus it needed to happen at the right time for the greatest effect. However, offering too much opportunity also risked going beyond the point of diminishing returns. The use of incentives to harvest antlerless deer thus became vital, no matter what season framework was developed.

Committee Specific Recommendations

The WCC supports effective and responsible herd control measures, provided that they are utilized in areas that are definitely over-goal. Again, the issue of population estimates was off the table for this special committee, but the Congress is studying that issue and many more. We have great concern that efforts to continually thin deer herds in areas where hunters cannot find deer will greatly damage existing and future hunter interest and adversely effect the involvement of those hunters in deer management.

One of the positions of the Congress that is not represented in the Preferred Package involves archery. Voting results at the Spring Fish & Game Hearings have supported the use of archery gear during any and all firearm seasons and that is the stance of the WCC.

We also feel that the Early October Muzzleloader Hunt included in the Secondary Package has nothing to do with effective herd control efforts. If muzzleloaders desire a season in October, they should advance the concept through the resolution process at the Spring Hearings.

The Statewide 4 day December Antlerless Hunt was initiated through the considerable effort and leadership of the WCC and with the support of many other organizations. It is included in the Preferred Package. We do not want this vital tool to go to the trash heap.

We would sincerely like to thank the NRB for inviting the Conservation Congress to partake in the efforts of this NRB committee. But, despite the fact that we had a representative on this committee, the WCC has not developed an official position regarding the work of the committee nor its findings. We actively continue to study a wide variety of options and ideas of our own with the intent of possibly developing our own season package and incentives for submission to the NRB.

WISCONSIN DEER HUNTERS ASSOCIATION

P.O. BOX 255, ROBERTS, WI 54023

www.wideerhunters.org



The Wisconsin Deer Hunters Association (WDHA) commends the NRB for addressing a very difficult issue. Deer hunting seasons and herd control alternatives have been discussed for decades, so any change (even no change) would be met with opposition. We believe that any effective herd control measures would be resisted by deer hunters, but we also believe that hunters support herd control. However, missing from the debate is the very real issue of deer sightings by hunters during the hunting season. We believe most of the discontent with hunters is simply they are not seeing deer that are present. If hunters don't see deer, they will continue to doubt the population estimates and won't voluntarily harvest antlerless deer. Somehow this major disconnect between the deer population and what hunters see in the field has to be explored and resolved.

We support the committee's preferred alternative because given the current limitations we believe the only way to assure that more deer would be seen by hunters was to move the gun season up a week to catch the end of the rut. This should help hunters see more deer during legal hunting hours and lead to an increase in voluntary antlerless harvest. The recommended incentives also include measures to encourage antlerless harvest in part by limiting buck harvest (1 buck/year, no group bagging). We feel these are essential to the package. However, while many bowhunters (who make up only 28% of license sales) will object, there are many gun hunters who would prefer this alternative.

While legislative hearings on EAB draw a lot of attention, we doubt a majority of deer hunters oppose EAB over other herd control alternatives. Since pre-qualification was allowed, this addressed a major concern with EAB. We believe another alternative that would be supported by hunters, that we already know is effective for herd control, is to keep the current season framework but revise the EAB criteria. However, the committee didn't feel this was within our charge so it was removed from consideration.

We recommend that the NRB gauge public input for the preferred package (or any alternative) against the current season with a revised EAB. Our proposed changes to EAB include:

- Increase the herd control (antlerless rifle season) implementation criteria from >20% over population goal to >25%.
- Allow the use of EAB only after 2 years of herd control, and only if >50% over population goals (current is criteria is >20% and 2 years).
- EAB can only be used in a DMU for 2 consecutive years before a 1 year break.
- The area game biologist must provide a report justifying the use of EAB in any DMU and provide information on deer distribution patterns so hunters will know the hot spots. Population estimates periodically reviewed by outside professionals.

These changes are aimed at addressing concerns and restoring hunter confidence in the use of EAB and shouldn't significantly change the effectiveness when used in any season package.

We also recommend that the DNR explain the problems of last year with the pre-hunt population estimates in plain English along with any changes that will help avoid that in the future. Hunters deserve an honest explanation to restore their confidence in the herd estimates. We also implore the DNR to follow the

recommendations of the SAK and DMU committees to further improve the process and restore hunter confidence which is critical for any form of herd control.

Finally, a majority of committee members felt that no alternative will be effective unless we address the problems with deer baiting and feeding. Many studies have shown that baiting reduces deer movement during legal hunting hours which is the root cause for widespread discontent. This results in hunters not seeing deer, which results in a chain of events starting with disagreement over herd population estimates, leading to hunters not harvesting adequate deer, herd control issues, repeated EAB seasons and ultimately a rejection of EAB itself. In addition baiting and feeding contribute to increased herd productivity further compounding the problem of herd control.

A study in South Carolina revealed that it takes a hunter on average 3.4 days to harvest a deer in areas where baiting is legal, compared to 1.2 days in areas where baiting is prohibited. They stated "It has been documented that changes in deer movements and behavior related to baiting lead to increased levels of nocturnal activity by deer and that younger animals are most susceptible to being seen/harvested during legal hunting hours".

They also used game cameras to document nocturnal behavior caused by baiting. In 30,000 observations they found that visitation rates at night were 25:1 versus day. They stated "If deer movements and behavior are being modified by bait/feed, what impact could this nocturnal use of bait be having on hunters' ability to efficiently harvest deer?" A published study found that baiting in Wisconsin negatively affects the gun harvest, which was attributed to reduced deer movement during the hunting season. This is clear evidence to what a majority of hunters are experiencing in the field.

The recent legislative hearings are a warning sign that we need to act quickly on the most important issues identified in the DNR's 2008 Gun Deer Hunting Questionnaire. The number one factor listed by hunters for a quality deer season was seeing deer. We urge the NRB and the DNR to use whatever means are available to restrict known practices that limit the number of deer seen and continue to work with the legislature on a permanent statewide resolution. As recent history has shown, unless we deal with deer baiting and feeding, we will be right back at the table in another few years discussing the same problem.

Wisconsin Hunters Rights Coalition

The Wisconsin Hunters Rights Coalition (WHRC) would like to thank the Natural Resources Board (NRB) for the opportunity to participate on the Earn-a-Buck Alternative Committee. We would also like to extend a special thanks to the Committee Chair, Ralph Fritsch and the Facilitator, Don Hill for their Herculean efforts to meet the challenging timeline and for trying to keep the committee within the scope of their charge.

Although the timetable and charge of the committee to find effective and acceptable alternatives to Earn-a-Buck were daunting to say the least, the committee worked very well to recognize the underlying problems with herd control. Despite our initial concern that the hunting community was under-represented on the committee, it appeared that remedies to address unequal distribution of deer, privatization, hunter selectivity, access, and hunter and landowner acceptance were being addressed and most were included on the survey for public input.

It was in the late stages of our deliberations that items appeared to be systematically dismissed. Proposals like free, over-the-counter, private land antlerless tags along with public land limited quota tags for herd control units would have addressed the unequal distribution of deer. This approach is used successfully in Michigan and many other states, yet was rejected.

The root cause of privatization and hunter selectivity of deer is the growing interest of hunters to harvest mature bucks. Well over one third of hunters in the survey recognized that antler restrictions would lessen their concerns about disturbing deer from their private land. It was also noted in data provided by Missouri that there was a thirteen percent increase in antlerless harvest when antler restrictions were applied. This management technique to reduce privatization and improve hunter satisfaction also failed despite documentation of hunter acceptance by a three to one margin in Pennsylvania.

Access items that were rejected included denying municipal shooting grants where some form of deer hunting is not allowed and requiring antlerless harvest on closed MFL lands in herd control units in order to qualify for MFL benefits.

It became obvious that the majority of the committee members dismissed hunter acceptance as required by the NRB, when at the last minute a sixteen day statewide season with a week earlier opener was supported. This was despite our own survey revealing sixty three percent of respondents do not support an earlier opener. Although the justification for their support was effective herd control, there are no established benchmarks to support increased antlerless harvest will occur. Yet the same block voted to reject a motion to make the first seven days of the early opener season antlerless only.

To the minorities surprise, the Conservation Congress, Whitetails Unlimited, and the Wisconsin Deer Hunters Association voted contrary to directives and interests of their own constituents. It is now apparent that the committee had been compromised, affecting not only the decision making process but the voting and final outcome. It is evident the committees' work was being influenced by entities outside the list of committee members. Because this influenced block voted in lock-step, it hampered all efforts to meet the mandate of effectiveness and acceptability set forth by the NRB.

Regrettably the Hunters Rights Coalition believes the process and outcome have been compromised. The committee's recommendations have not met the charge of being an effective alternative that will be accepted by hunters; therefore we are unable to give our support to the final outcomes of the committee.

We do however; urge the NRB to allow the public to weigh in on both the majority and minority packages. The effort of committee members who responsibly conveyed their member's positions should not be over looked.



Wisconsin Wildlife Federation

The Wisconsin Wildlife Federation is one of the state's largest and oldest Conservation and Sporting Organizations. A total of over 168 organizations and clubs make up the supporting body of the W.W.F. The Federation has long been involved in leading legislation efforts on sporting activities, governing hunting, fishing & trapping. Our efforts stretch much further than current state & federal issues pertaining to the state's natural resources. We also support, on a yearly manner, eight scholarships are awarded in the field of natural resources at the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point. We operate the MacKenzie Environmental Education Center in Poynette to support the strong education that is the key for the future leaders and keepers of the state's resources.

Lesson Learned

Our long relationship with the Wisconsin D.N.R. has given us a good working partnership and together we have seen success and understanding through the years. Working with the state legislators on environmental issues has also placed us in a unique position as being versatile and well rounded in natural resources and their future. Our representation of most conservation and environmental issues gives us a large base of operation and membership strength. Their interests are our goals. Being a contributing part of this Committee and its efforts has placed us in the body of the State's sporting interests. We with other represented organizations addressed the NRB Board request and fulfilled our charge through the Committee's efforts.

Group Input

W.W.F. was grateful to be selected as one of the organizations to be part of this Special Advisory Committee. The charge set before us, and guidelines within that charge, restricted all but the most direct avenues to arriving at an outcome within the time available. This restrictive time period to render an outcome also placed the Committee on an extra fast time table to accomplish the tasks needed to meet the NRB's charge.

The process taken by the Committee began with a long list of potential alternatives and options. Through three full Committee meetings and nearly a dozen phone conferences we addressed and moved these alternatives forward in a majority approval process to arrive at a final recommendation. The committee members' willingness to remain regularly involved during the summer season greatly assisted with meeting our short timetable. To serve as a member of this Committee, you had to set aside time and make an extra effort to participate in a fast moving and constant decision making process.

The very restrictive guideline as to what we as a committee could address and discuss on the topic assigned, narrowed the path of the Committee and shortened the list of solutions to address an overwhelming statewide problem.

With Earn-A-Buck (EAB) being a successful tool in herd reduction and recognized as such, developing alternatives was a task very hard to compete with EAB as an existing solution.

The Committee's efforts lead down two paths – hunting seasons, and hunter and landowner incentives. These two components created the basis of our final findings and report to the Natural Resources Board. The public comments to the many initial proposed solutions we submitted using online surveys gave a good sense of the public response to our pending solutions. Likewise, a survey to D.N.R. Wardens, Wildlife Biologists and support Staff Members was also useful for considering the feasibility of each proposed solutions. Obtaining those D.N.R. Survey comments earlier in our process would have benefited our work rather than having it be gathered near the end of the Committee's efforts.

What we submitted to the NRB is the result of informative discussions and detailed thoughts over existing ideas and potentially new solutions to the elimination of Earn-A-Buck. The Committee was also interested in solutions that improved efforts to keep herd population at or near goal.

The Committee as a whole worked together toward completion of its goal. Assistance rendered by the D.N.R. staff answering research and historical information inquiries was very important and support the timely completion of the Committee's work. The efforts of the facilitator made our tasks much easier and the availability of phone conferences and other meeting facilitation tools were also very important to completing our charge.

Acting as Committee Chairman, I feel the Committee completed its charge to the Board as directed by their guidelines. Committee member knowledge of other relevant issues outside the charge did come up but were set aside to reach the final findings. Committee members may have given the NRB greater insight to the Earn-A-Buck issue if given more freedom to do so. But given the time available to complete the alternative work, keeping a narrow focus helped.

Recommendations:

A review by the Natural Resources Board of this report hopefully will result in an opportunity to send these findings to the public for further comment. This would encourage the public to address seasonal packages as a "mix and match" of options if they fail to agree to support current season structures. This "mix and match" viewpoint may work better to gather public responses and understand public wants. The incentives included in the report are just that, and offer the opportunity to make decisions on a case by case basis.

I would also like to stress that these recommended packages are to assist in overcoming the use of Earn-A-Buck and should be seen as such. Earn-A-Buck has been proven to be a very effective tool in deer population, but it is also not supported wholly by the deer hunting community. Also, it should be factored into the Committee's proposals that Earn-A-Buck will be replaced by some type of proposal and failure to act in an effective manner will lead to the continued use of Earn-A-Buck.

Example: "It's either pizza or lasagna. You're going to get one of them!"



still growing!

WWOA OFFICE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Nancy C. Bozek
P.O. Box 285
Stevens Point, WI 54481
715/346-4798
FAX 715/346-4821

WWOA OFFICERS
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
2008-2009

PRESIDENT
Merlin C. Becker
N6888 State Rd. 22-110
Manawa, WI 54949
920/596-3416
mbecker@wolfnet.net

PRESIDENT ELECT
Loren Hanson
4227 E. Apollo Ln.
Janesville, WI 53546
608/868-3398
lorenh@centurytel.net

SECRETARY
Alvin L. Barden
4427 Chain O'Lakes Rd.
Eagle River, WI 54521
715/479-8449
bardenalb@nnet.net

TREASURER
Donna R. Johnston
7126 Cty Rd. I
Oconto Falls, WI 54154
920/848-2026
johnfor@bayland.net

DIRECTORS
Joe Arington
2935 Evergreen Dr.
Cambridge, WI 53523
608/675-9673
joe@aringtonreefarm.com

John Czerwonka
565 S. State Rd. 49
Wittenberg, WI 54499
715/454-6440

William J. Horvath
350 McDill Ave.
Stevens Point, WI 54481
715/341-4021
bill.horvath@sbcglobal.net

Jan L. Lehrer
N10811 Co. Hwy. P
Iola, WI 54945
715/677-3850
leelehrer@wi-net.com

Edwin R. Moberg
2300 Cty. Hwy. G
Nekoosa, WI 54457
715/836-4501
hemtrees@wctc.net

James Rivers
N5177 23rd Rd.
Wild Rose, WI 54984
920/622-5124
jarivers@centurytel.net

Eugene M. Roark
16 Grand Ave.
Madison, WI 53705
608/238-5349
geneandjeandroark@sbcglobal.net

EDITOR
Timothy Eisele
129 South Sequoia Rd.

Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association, Inc.

P.O. Box 285, Stevens Point, WI 54481-0285

www.wisconsinwoodlands.org

Overview of Group

The Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association (WWOA) is comprised of 14 chapters across the state, representing over 2,200 landowner members that own more than 300,000 acres of private forested land in Wisconsin. WWOA chapters host events allowing members to meet neighboring woodland owners, learn more about local forest issues and management techniques, and work with DNR and consulting foresters. An important part of WWOA's mission is to provide educational opportunities for members, their families, and the public to learn more about sustainable forest management of Wisconsin's forests.

Lessons Learned from the Special Advisory Study Committee

WWOA participated on the Special Advisory Committee to the NRB because we consider managing private forest land a responsibility of our membership. Every woodland owner enjoys seeing and/or hunting deer on their land. This is just one part of carrying on traditions which in some families have been passed on down for generations. Woodland owners also take pride in being good stewards of their land for wildlife, native flowers and vegetation, including healthy young and mature trees.

Advisory Study Committee Input

WWOA members are aware of the impacts that occur in our woodlands when the deer herd numbers affect tree and plant regeneration. We are aware of the difficulty regenerating tree species such as oak, cedar, hemlock and pine due to over-browsing by deer in some areas of the state. We need to balance deer population with available habitat to support sustainable forest management practices. Woodland owners are being bombarded with invasive insects, plants, and trees so when you add in deer herd management being a good steward becomes a complex task.

WWOA supports the proposal that the Special Advisory Study Committee will be presenting to the Natural Resource Board. We also support many of the incentives that the committee discussed and voted on. Private landowner incentives like antlerless only landowner tags issued by wildlife managers or payments provided to private landowners who allow hunters access to their property are several examples of win-win ideas to improve management of the deer herd while providing the deer hunter with more opportunities.